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Images of Moses and Sixteenth-Century Venice

Volume 1 of 2

by

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Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice (Sala Superiore).
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DECLARATION

I declare that to the best of my knowledge, and unless otherwise stated, the material in this thesis is the original work of the author and has not been published before.

ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the striking proliferation of Moses imagery in sixteenth-century Venice by considering the images as a distinctive category. Although the narratives of Moses can be found elsewhere in Italy, the Venetian treatment of these subjects is distinguished by their number and their placement not in private chapels but in locations available to a broad audience. Additionally, a contrast can be made between the central Italian examples, which display variations on a political theme originally established by St. Thomas Aquinas, and the peculiar Venetian approach to the prophet, influenced by the city's Byzantine roots and its constitution. In tracing the development of this imagery in the sixteenth century, initial consideration must be given to the roots of its stylistic interpretation in the Veneto where paintings for chapels of the Sacrament exhibit the group-oriented compositions that characterize the works throughout the period. In this context, the pioneering work of Jacopo Tintoretto forms the principal focus of this thesis, arguing that he was the first to introduce Moses imagery into Venice on a monumental scale. In his works for the main chapel of the Church of the Madonna dell'Orto and the ceiling of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, the image of Moses takes on heightened theological significance in the general religious context of the Counter Reformation and in the particular Venetian contexts of parish and confraternity. The interplay of such monumental painting and printed book illustration is also considered. It is the influence of Tintoretto's approach to Moses on later artists that forms in part the foundation for the proliferation of the subjects in the later years of the sixteenth and the early years of the seventeenth century.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASV	Archivio di Stato, Venice
BMV	Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice
MCV	Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr, Venice

Introduction

*Moses may be said to be a character
dear to the heart of all Venetian painters.*

This was the opinion of amateur art historian Walter Shaw Sparrow in his ambitious survey, *The Old Testament in Art* (1905).¹ Sparrow gave no evidence to back this sweeping claim, yet the observation is intriguing because there appears to be truth to it. Professional scholars have yet to evaluate Sparrow's remark since they have not been accustomed to engaging critically with Old Testament imagery in Venice as a category. But in the churches and scuole of Venice there can be found images of Moses and his narratives in situ in every *sestiere* of the city.² Works now dispersed in museums and private collections, but produced and displayed in sixteenth-century Venice, depict the Old Testament prophet and the Exodus stories. There appears to be reason to take seriously Sparrow's suggestion that the subjects from Exodus and Numbers appear to have had special appeal for the Venetian painters, particularly those of the sixteenth century.

Images of Moses and the Exodus narratives were, of course, prevalent elsewhere in Renaissance Italy. Amongst the largest and most important Moses cycles were those produced for the walls of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, for the Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo in Florence and in the tapestries of the Gonzaga court. The function of these late fifteenth to mid sixteenth-century images, particularly their

¹ W. Shaw Sparrow, ed., *The Old Testament in Art* (London: Hodder, 1905) 23.

² See the Appendix for a chronological catalogue of sixteenth-century Venetian images of the narratives of Moses.

political import, relative to contemporary Venetian works will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. However, what distinguishes the Venetian treatment of the Moses narratives from their *terra firma* counterparts is their widespread currency: their number and their placement not in private chapels but in locations available to a broad audience. Given the loss of works over time and the inefficiency of accounts in the period, it is difficult to make accurate comparisons of the frequency of images of Moses. However, if one compares guidebooks of Venice and Rome, a distinct contrast emerges. Marco Boschini, in his *Le minere della pittura* of 1664, records the presence of paintings of the narratives of Moses in no less than twenty-eight Venetian churches.³ By contrast, Filippo Titi, in his *Studio di pittura, scoltura, et architettura, nelle chiese di Roma* (a book similar in size, remit and publication date to Boschini's), notes the presence of pictures of the Moses narratives in only three churches.⁴ This striking ratio of nine to one begs several fundamental questions.

First, why did the narratives of Moses become so prominent in Venice? An initial point of departure will be a consideration of the special devotion to Moses in the city. The Venetians had an unusual reverence for Moses along with other Old Testament prophets, such as Daniel, Job, Jeremiah, Samuel, Simeon and Zechariah, each with a titular church in Venice. Here the impact of the Eastern Church on Venice from the very beginning of its lagoon settlement contrasts with the other great Italian city-states with their religious roots in the Latin Church. With the East, Venice honored Old Testament prophets as saints. This peculiar Venetian attachment to Old Testament "saints" and the Eastern rite in general remains a feature of the city's

³ Marco Boschini, *Le minere della pittura* (Venice, 1664). Additionally, Boschini notes numerous instances of unidentified *historie del Testamento Vecchio* in Venetian churches.

religious culture even today and will receive a full discussion in Chapter 1. However, at this juncture it raises another interesting problem: if the Venetian veneration of Moses can be traced to its earliest history, why is it only in the late sixteenth century that artists and their patrons begin to depict the prophet with such enthusiasm?

For each of the Venetian churches displaying images of the narratives of Moses, Boschini cites the artist of each picture. His record reveals that, with one exception, the artists were active sometime between the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, with the majority flourishing no earlier than the 1580s.⁵ A common explanation for the proliferation of Moses imagery in the late sixteenth century is the increased devotion to the Eucharist in the wake of the Council of Trent. Most importantly it is understood as part of an overall Counter Reform response to Protestant heresy, a means of defending the Real Presence by use of Old Testament prototype, such as the story of the manna in the desert. Though the Council of Trent encouraged such typological thinking, this line of reasoning does not take into full account the already established development of this typological iconography in the Veneto well before the age of Counter Reform, an argument already established by Maurice Cope.⁶ Nor does it take into consideration the simultaneous rise in production of images of Moses narratives for Venetian private patrons, images characterized overwhelmingly by the Presentation of Moses to Pharaoh's Daughter, a subject that appears to have no easy application to the rebuttal of heresy. These issues will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 7, but here again a

⁴ Filippo Titi, *Studio di pittura, scoltura, et architettura, nelle chiese di Roma* (Rome, 1674). Titi also notes Michelangelo's *Moses* (a single figure sculpture) in San Pietro in Vincoli.

⁵ Boschini records that at the Church of San Moisè there was a Moses depicted on the organ shutters in the manner of Vivarini. Boschini, *Le minere* 105.

⁶ Maurice Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, diss., U of Chicago, 1965 (New York: Garland, 1979) esp. 176-255.

question is introduced: how do we account for two concurrent yet seemingly separate strains of Moses iconography?

Unfortunately, the sixteenth-century Venetians have left us very little direct evidence to resolve this issue. Though images destined for public locations, such as churches and scuole, tend to be better documented than works for private patrons, it is the rare instance that a contract survives or that the content of the images is discussed in it. In the case of paintings for private homes, even less information survives. For example, though Veronese created numerous versions of the Presentation of Moses to Pharaoh's Daughter, extant documents shed light on only one of them, and then only helping us to identify in which palace it might once have been displayed.

Additionally, there exists in the sixteenth century almost no general discussion of Moses that would help the historian understand the place he occupied in Venetian thought. With the exception of brief comparative references to the prophet in oratories dedicated to the doges, it can be said that there is no surviving written "discourse" of Moses in Venice. Therefore, the study of the stylistic roots of the images, which artists picked up on the different traditions and how they developed them in their local contexts, will be the most useful method of approach. Confronting Sparrow's assertion about the special relationship between Moses and the Venetians, it is the interrogation of the images themselves that will bring us closest to the thoughts of the artists, the patrons and the audience of sixteenth-century Venice.

In result, this thesis seeks to contextualize the image of Moses in Venice. On the one hand, this contextualization must necessarily be comparative: what sets the Venetian image of the Exodus stories apart visually from other Italian Renaissance treatments of the subjects? What cultural factors might have influenced the Venetian

interpretation of the image of Moses in a way that was distinctive? On the other hand, this method also requires statistical analysis: what subjects were painted? In what context? Who painted them, and for whom? By establishing as definitely as possible the distinguishing patterns of the production and display of these images, a picture of the Venetian relationship with the Moses iconography will emerge, a picture that is fundamental in helping to answer some of the questions and problems raised in the preceding pages. Most significantly, however, will be the consideration of the images in as precise a local context as possible, even down to a consideration of parish where necessary. Drawing on scholarship relating to the broader social situations of specific parishes, the Venetian scuole, or the social elites commissioning certain images, will allow us to inquire more deeply into the subtle variations in subject, style and meaning that Moses had within the Venetian setting.

Some explanation needs to be made to clarify what this thesis will take to mean by an image of Moses. Of primary importance are narrative images of the stories of Moses. Pictorial narrative could be defined in several ways. Here, however, the definition will be restricted to those images that depict characters in action or as part of an event in a defined setting. These may either be self-contained narratives or part of a wider program, incorporating other Biblical or hagiographic episodes. Additionally, the main line of inquiry will focus on narrative images that refer to the stories of Exodus and Numbers, the two books of the Bible that recount the life of Moses and the journey of the Hebrews out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land.⁷ The image of Moses may be found in many other settings in Venice: as part of the heavenly host of saints, as in Tintoretto's *Paradise* in the Maggior Consiglio at the

Ducal Palace (fig. 214), or as a part of a New Testament narrative, as in Titian's *Transfiguration* for San Salvador (fig. 222). While these aspects of Moses in Venice will be mentioned, it is the impact of the Old Testament narrative where Moses and the Hebrews are the central protagonists that will guide this study. *

Chapter 1 of this thesis introduces the Judeo-Christian tradition of Moses, including both scriptural and exegetical references. In addition, the history of the veneration of Moses in Venice will be presented, giving special consideration to the link between Venice and the East. Chapter 2 concentrates on the image of Moses in other city-states as a means to draw attention to Venetian difference. The patronage and function of the great Italian cycles of Moses of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century will be reviewed with special emphasis placed on the political understanding of Moses on the peninsula at this time. This will then be used to highlight the peculiarities of the Venetian political understanding of Moses. Chapter 3 addresses the period of the efflorescence of the narrative imagery of Moses in Venice. We will consider typology and the history of the iconography of Moses, especially the developments in the Veneto region in the years preceding the Council of Trent. Analyzing the chronological catalogue of Moses imagery (see the Appendix), we will begin to explore the early evolution of this imagery in Venice. The first three chapters provide a foundation for the next three, Chapters 4 through 6, which examine how local contexts shaped the production and interpretation of works of art. Focusing on three great works of Tintoretto at the Madonna dell'Orto, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and at San Giorgio Maggiore, we will think about the function these images served in their settings and the responses that they may have generated in their

⁷ The two other books of the Bible that deal with the period of Moses' life, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

audiences. Chapter 6 will make a particular investigation of contemporary printed Bible illustration and suggest how visual narratives might have been read in the period and how artists might have formulated new pictorial ideas. The final section, Chapter 7, will reflect on the legacy of Moses in Venice to the later sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It will conclude with a brief discussion of Veronese's work for private patrons. A comprehensive catalogue of narrative images of Moses in Venice to c. 1620 is placed at the end of the thesis. Its purpose is, on the one hand, to provide a reference to the works in their original contexts and, on the other hand, to provide a record of the development of these images in the period in which they first began to flourish.

*As the following chapters will show in their investigation of the formal features of these narrative images, it is the emphasis on the group that distinguishes Veneto and Venetian images of Moses from their central Italian counterparts. Iconographic analysis will demonstrate that the Venetian representation of Moses does not act as an isolated protagonist in the Old Testament scenes but always in relationship to, or indeed subsumed within, the community of Hebrews. In some instances this emphasis is made apparent by composition or figure style: the prophet is de-centered in the composition; he is upstaged by the mass of activity in the Hebrew camp; or his identity is obscured by the twisting of his body relative to the viewer. In other examples, and depicted most strikingly at the *Madonna dell'Orto*, his role as human leader is subverted by his relationship as spiritual mediator between God and the Israelites. In every case, the meaning of Moses depends upon his relationship to the group. It is the sense of the communal, rather than the individual, that prevails.

Chapter 1

The Background to Moses in Venice

Introduction

In order to appreciate what is distinctive about the Venetian approach to Moses in the sixteenth century, we must first address the accumulation of thought on Moses that had been built up prior to that time. This background to Moses falls into two parts: that which is essential to the Judeo-Christian tradition as a whole and that which is particular to Venice. Scripture was, of course, the foundation upon which all further thought was based. The understanding of Moses is rooted in the Old Testament: in the narratives in which he plays a part and in the succeeding lineage of Jewish leaders and kings for whom he and his law—the Law of Moses—set an example. The New Testament, particularly the Gospels and the Epistles, interpret the prophet in light of the life of Christ and the new covenant that he precipitates. From this point, the Judeo-Christian tradition of the Common Era provides a wealth of exegetical reflection on Moses. This includes, on the Jewish side, Josephus (c. 37 – c. 100 AD), and, on the Christian side, the Cappadocian church father Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 – c. 394). The influence of the writings on Moses by both of these men can be traced throughout the Renaissance but with especial profundity in Venice. Indeed, in the lagoon city, Moses traces his own peculiar history: he is revered as a saint; he is venerated at his titular church; his relics and his cult helped to maintain Venice's identification with the East; and mosaic narratives at San Marco that celebrate his life inserted him into a wider Venetian understanding of the link between the sacred and the secular.

Moses and the Old Testament

The books of Moses—Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—can be divided into two parts according to purpose: the hagiography of Moses and the theology of the Hebrews.¹ The first is the focus on the early biography of Moses and his call to lead the People of Israel. This occupies three chapters, Exod. 2-4, which describe his birth and entry into the Egyptian royal household (2: 1-10), his escape to Midian (2: 11-22), the incident at the burning bush (3: 1-15), the instruction of his mission (3: 16-4: 17) and his return to Egypt (4: 18-31).² Once he returns to Egypt, however, Moses enters his public life. The centrality of his biography diminishes as the Pentateuch gives greater prominence to the relationship between the Hebrew God and his people, with Moses acting as mediator.³ The oppression of the Hebrews in Egypt is established in Exod. 1. Exod. 5-40 and the Book of Numbers recount the Hebrews' escape from Egypt, including the Passover (Exod. 12: 1-13: 16) and the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14: 15-15: 21); their journey through the desert, including the miracles of the manna (Exod. 16 and Num. 11), of the water spouting from the Rock of Horeb (Exod. 17: 1-7 and Num. 20: 1-13), and of the brazen serpent (Num. 21: 4-9); the covenant, including the Decalogue delivered at Sinai (Exod. 19-24); and the worship of the golden calf and the renewal of the covenant (Exod. 32-34). The Book of Leviticus and the Book of Deuteronomy, though not narrative in format, reinforce the holiness of God and, correspondingly, that of his people.

¹ Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Images of Moses* (New York: Basic, 1982) 25.

² All biblical references and quotations in this thesis are, unless otherwise noted, taken from the *New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

³ For an introduction to Jewish understanding of Moses' role in the Exodus stories relative to the narrative of the Chosen People, see Silver, *Images* esp. Chapter 1. See also Peter Calvocoressi, *Who's Who in the Bible* (London: Viking, 1987) 169.

Through the ordinances of law and ritual, these books set Israel apart from neighboring clans.

This structure—part hagiography, part theology—particularly the narrative of the Book of Exodus, sets up a dichotomy of understandings of the same man: one that celebrates his individuality and one that subsumes his personality into that of the group. Both of these themes are raised throughout the Old Testament. Moses the man—the great leader—provides the template for all of the leaders of Israel, as well as some prominent leaders in the Christian world, as will be discussed in Chapter 2.⁴ However, Moses is also the connection between God and the people. In this sense, he is a servant, the symbol of obedience, the embodiment of the Law—the Law of Moses—that stands as the benchmark for all good kings.⁵

Moses and the New Testament

The New Testament alludes to the figure of Moses repeatedly. The references to Moses are varied and sometimes overlapping in their rhetorical purpose. For the sake of simplicity, however, he will be addressed here in terms of three key functions: as prophet of the coming of Christ; as emblem of the Law used as a point of argument between Jesus and the Jews; and as foil to the new covenant, Christianity. In the first two positions, Moses confirms the continuity between the old and new covenants. In the third, he plays a subordinating role to highlight the superiority of Christ and the new order.

⁴ This is particularly true in the Book of Joshua, in which Joshua's capability to succeed Moses as leader of the Hebrews is affirmed by his similarity to Moses in his potential for greatness and his closeness to Yahweh. See Joshua 1: 1-5, 3: 7 and 4: 14.

Moses as Prophet of Christ

Throughout the New Testament Moses is described as a prophet who announces the coming of the messiah. He is witness to the word that foretells the coming of Christ. This is suggested, of course, at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 2; Mark 9: 4; Luke 9: 30), where Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus, indicating in a mystical sense the continuity between the old and new covenants. However, Jesus, in his preaching, makes explicit the connection between the mission of Moses and that of the Christ. He protests that if the people really believed Moses, then they would believe him too. (John 5: 45-46) On the way to Emmaus, he chides the two disciples for misunderstanding the role of the messiah and the meaning of his resurrection: “Then he began with Moses and all the prophets, and explained to them the passages, which referred to himself in every part of the scriptures.” (Luke 24: 27)⁶

In addition to Moses’ words and prophecies, his actions and the events he oversees are also understood as prefigurations of what was to come at the coming of Christ. Both the Gospel of John and Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians make these typological connections: the lifting of the brazen serpent is likened to the raising of Jesus on the cross (John 3: 14); the manna in the desert is described as a precursor to the “true bread” that the Christ brings (John 6: 32; 1 Cor. 10: 3); and the water from the Rock of Horeb is equated with the “supernatural drink” poured forth by Christ (1 Cor. 10: 4). The use of typologies of Moses and Christ in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries will be discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis, most

⁵ 1 Kings 2: 1-3; 2 Kings 23: 24-25; 2 Chron. 23: 18; Ezra 3: 2; Dan. 9: 11.

⁶ See also Luke 24: 44; Acts 3: 22-24, 26: 22-23. The apostles make the connection between Moses and Jesus in John 1: 45. Stephen provokes his martyrdom at the hands of the Jews when he recounts the story of Moses to indicate how the Jews have always rejected the prophets whom God sends (Acts 7: 20-53). Paul makes a direct appeal to the Law of Moses in an effort to convert the Jews in Rome. Acts 28: 23.

notably in Chapters 2 and 3. It is enough here, however, to note that words and deeds of the Old Testament prophet Moses are cited repeatedly in the New Testament to underscore to the early Christian communities the scriptural authority for the coming of Christ.

The Law of Moses Debated by Jesus and the Jews

The Gospels recall several debates between Jesus and the Jewish rabbis and priests. This rhetorical format, employed most frequently by the three synoptic Gospels, uses the Law of Moses as a fulcrum for argument: the Jews present Jesus with a theological problem emerging from the Law in hopes of outwitting him; then Jesus responds in a way that supports the Law yet simultaneously indicates its limitations and the foolishness of those who interpret it literally. The Pharisees invoke the Law of Moses to test Jesus on the permissibility of divorce (Matt 19: 7-8; Mark 10: 2-5) and the punishment for adultery (John 8: 3-5) while the Sadducees test him on the Mosaic basis for resurrection (Matt. 22: 23-4; Mark 12: 18-19; Luke 20: 27-28, 37-38).⁷ Occasionally, Jesus invokes the Law himself to underscore its continuing importance: “Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.... In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved.” (Matt. 5: 17-18) He tells the people to follow the words of the Pharisees because they are doctors of the Law of Moses but not to follow their actions (Matt. 23: 1-3), and he reminds the people, in parable, that they should listen to and follow Moses and the prophets (Luke 16: 29-31).⁸ The

⁷ See Deut. 24: 1 and 25: 5-6.

⁸ For further disputes over the Law of Moses, see also John 7: 19, 22, 23.

Gospel writers use these moments to point up both the continuity of the covenant made with Moses but also to emphasize a deeper spiritual understanding of that Law.⁹

Moses as Foil to the New Covenant

While all four Gospels stress the prophecies of Moses and the spiritual importance of the Law to point to the continuity of the old and new covenants, it is only in the fourth Gospel that the way of Moses and the way of Christ are set in antithetical terms. John brings this point in right at the beginning: “For while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1: 17) With this verse, John demonstrates not only the difference between the Law of Moses and the way of Christ but also indicates how “the new order fulfills, surpasses and replaces the old.”¹⁰ With these words, John effectively establishes Christianity as a distinct and superseding religion to Judaism.

The typologies discussed earlier as examples of the continuity of old and new covenant could equally be understood as examples of the subordination of the old to the new order.¹¹ For instance, at the discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus not only compares the manna that God gave in the days of Moses with the “true bread,” but he affirms that, unlike the manna, the spiritual bread gives eternal life to all mankind.¹² Above all, Jesus here demotes the status of Moses in the minds of the

⁹ See Mark 7.

¹⁰ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Basingstoke: Pickering, 1983) 43. See also Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (London: Marshall, 1971) 111-112.

¹¹ This is a recurring theme in John, the Gospel in which the typologies are most in evidence. See Bruce, *Gospel* 43-44 and Morris, *Gospel* 112.

¹² In the Jewish *haggadic* tradition, the giving of the manna in Exodus and Numbers is never interpreted as having a deeper theological significance. Bruce J. Malina, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1968) 24.

people. He corrects the claim that Moses brought the manna from heaven and reminds the people that it was God who fed them.

The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, as part of the mission of the new religion, pursue the theological implications of John's Gospel. In dealing with the specific ways in which the law has changed with the coming of Christ, issues such as the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation are raised (Acts 13: 39; Romans 5: 14).¹³ As the mission expands to include the Gentiles, the necessity of rituals such as circumcision are debated (Acts 15: 1, 7-11).¹⁴

Above all, however, in establishing Christianity as the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, John and Paul use the comparison of light and darkness, sight and blindness. In the story of the blind man restored to sight, the people say they are disciples of Moses because they know that God spoke to him, whereas they have no idea where Jesus comes from. The man replies: "What an extraordinary thing! Here is a man who has opened my eyes, yet you do not know where he comes from!" (John 9: 28-30) In adhering to Moses, the people remain blinded, while the man who believes in Jesus is given new vision. Authority is placed in Jesus.¹⁵ In the Second Letter to the Corinthians Paul makes the simplicity of this story from John more explicit: "[The Israelites's] minds were closed; indeed, until this very day, the same veil remains over the reading of the Old Testament: it is not lifted, for only in Christ is it done away with." (2 Cor. 3: 14) Here, Paul suggests that the veil that Moses wore over his face to shield the Hebrews from the splendor of God, which had come over him at Mount

¹³ For more on the change of the law, see Heb. 7: 12, 14.

¹⁴ The issue of circumcision for converted Gentiles is brought up again in Acts 21: 21.

¹⁵ Bruce, *Gospel* 218.

Sinai (Exod. 34: 29-35), is lifted through Christ.¹⁶ Like the people in John's story who focus on Moses, there can only be blindness in the old covenant. For the cured blind man, however, sight is regained in the light of Christ.¹⁷

Moses in Jewish and Christian Exegesis and Tradition

Moses had always been an important figure in rabbinic discourse, but it was Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (c. 93-94 AD) that proved to be the Jewish interpretation of the prophet with the widest reaching impact in the West. In Venice alone, the *Antiquities* was published in various formats (sometimes in conjunction with the *Jewish Wars* of c. 70 AD) at least seven times before the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁸ Unlike the Biblical narrative, which focuses mainly on the relationship between God and the Hebrews, Josephus concentrates on Moses the man. He draws on *midrash* and *haggadah*, the traditional Jewish lore that offers an exposition of the significance of Biblical texts, to expand the Biblical narratives. Josephus develops, in particular, the stories of Moses' birth and the miracles of his infancy.¹⁹ The *Antiquities* is the source of some of the legends that became part of the Christian tradition, such as the Trial of Moses, which will be discussed shortly with reference to

¹⁶ Relying on Paul's text, medieval mystery plays portrayed Moses as a veiled figure, a symbol of obstinacy to Christ and the new covenant. For more on the use of Moses in medieval mystery plays, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1970) 32-35 and Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, vol. 2.1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956) 177.

¹⁷ In addition to blindness, hardness of heart is also used to indicate unbelief in Christ. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews suggests that it is hardness of heart that characterized the followers of Moses who died in the desert, those who were prevented from entering the Promised Land. (Heb. 3: 15-19, 11: 23-29)

¹⁸ The *Jewish Antiquities* was printed in Venice in at least 1481, 1486, 1510, 1544, 1549, 1581 and 1582. See The British Museum, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in Italy and of Italian Books Printed in Other Countries from 1465 to 1600 Now in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1958) and The British Library, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in Italy and of Italian Books Printed in Other Countries from 1465 to 1600 Now in the British Library, Supplement* (London: British Library, 1986).

the San Marco atrium mosaics.²⁰ Additionally, by emphasizing Moses the man and accentuating his role as the virtuous lawgiver and leader, the *Antiquities* provided a characterization of Moses' that became an essential motif in the figuring of Renaissance leaders, a point that will be discussed in Chapter 3.²¹

In the Christian tradition, Moses featured frequently in the commentaries of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine and several medieval theologians comment on him.²² In this context, Gregory of Nyssa's late fourth-century *De Vita Moysis* is of especial importance, having been published in Venice at least once in 1536.²³ Though Gregory's works are part of Eastern theology, recent scholarship has aimed to clarify the degree of influence Gregory had on the West. Though there was growing interest in Greek Church Fathers among the humanists, it is only after the death of Erasmus in 1536—a strong proponent of the Eastern texts as stimuli to further "Christian humanism"—that Gregory of Nyssa was first printed in the West.²⁴ Gregory presents the life of Moses in two parts: an outline

¹⁹ For the birth and infancy of Moses, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 2: 9.

²⁰ For the development of the Trial of Moses from Josephus, see Joseph Gutmann, "The Testing of Moses: A Comparative Study in Christian, Muslim and Jewish Art," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 2 (1988): 107-17. In the first millennium, there is evidence that more obscure *midrashic* legends were known and influential in Christian communities. Unusual iconographical features in Christian art are often explained by the artistic and literary exchange between the religious groups. See Bezalel Narkiss, "Pharaoh is Dead and Living at the Gates of Hell," *Journal of Jewish Art* 10 (1984): 11-13 and Carlo-Otto Nordström, "The Water Miracles of Moses in Jewish Legend and Byzantine Art," *Orientalia Suecana* 7 (1958), rpt. in *No Graven Images: Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (New York: Ktav, 1971) 278. For references to the exchange of ideas about Moses between later rabbis and the medieval theologians, see Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses* 84-86.

²¹ The *Antiquities* was, in fact, not written for a Jewish audience but as a Jewish apologetic for a Greek audience. For a thorough discussion of Josephus' appeal to Greek readers, see Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 82 (1992): 285-328; 83 (1993) 7-50, 301-330. Josephus' characterization of Moses "emerges as a combination of Thucydides' Pericles, Plato's philosopher-king, Virgil's Aeneas, and the Stoic sage." (83: 326)

²² For a break down of early Christian commentary with reference to the important moments of Moses' life, see Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1971) 282-90. For references to medieval theologians on Moses, see Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses* 84-86.

²³ See British Museum, *Short-Title Catalogue* and British Library, *Supplement*.

²⁴ See Deno John Geanakoplos, *Interaction of the "Sibling" Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance (330-1600)* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976) 58, 279.

of the prophet's life and an allegorical reading of that biography as model for the journey of a spiritually virtuous life. As a prologue to the life of Moses, the Cappadocian Father writes: "Certainly whoever pursues true virtue participates in nothing other than God, because he is himself absolute virtue." (*De Vita Moysis*, 1.7)²⁵ Some of Gregory's more mystical approaches, such as the treatment of Moses at Sinai, provide possible sources for difficult iconographies that emerge in sixteenth-century Venice.²⁶

Moses Revered as Saint in the East and in Venice

The inclusion of Old Testament figures in the litany of saints is distinctive to the Eastern or Byzantine rite from its earliest origins to the present day. Stemming from the early Christian definition of "saint" as a witness to God, these holy men stood equally alongside the martyrs and saints of the Christian era.²⁷ Though the Latin Church regarded the prophets as holy men, figures such as Abraham, Elijah and David were no more than antecedents to the apostles. By contrast, the East called upon these Old Testament figures as heavenly intercessors.²⁸

In its early history under the political and religious dominion of Constantinople, Venice shared the eastern reverence for the ancient prophets and patriarchs. As with other saints that were peculiar to the Eastern Church, such as Venice's earliest patron, Saint Theodore, the feast days for Old Testament saints

²⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist, 1978) 31.

²⁶ See Chapters 5 and 7.

²⁷ The later Western understanding of "saint" was a follower of Christ who performed a religiously heroic act, most notably martyrdom.

²⁸ See Antonio Niero, "Culto dei santi dell'antico testamento," in Don Silvio Tramontin, ed. *Culto dei santi a Venezia*, Biblioteca Agiografica Veneziana 2 (Venice: Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano) 157.

coincide with those in the Byzantine liturgy.²⁹ The feast day for Moses in both Venice and the East is 4 September.³⁰ This holy day appears for the first time in a Venetian calendar in 1303 and then occurs again in the *Missale Veneziano* of 1456, the fifteenth-century *Arte del Navegar* and in the first Venetian printed calendar in 1589.³¹ The day of *Moysis Prophetæ* is marked throughout the following centuries in sources including the *Menologium Venetum* of 1749, the *Kalendarium Perpetuum* of 1791, the reformed calendar of 1831 and the Patriarch Trevisan *Proprium* of 1871.³² Though Moses remains even today in the Venetian litany of saints, the feast day on 4 September is observed only at the parish church of San Moisè.³³ Given the lack of any positive documentary evidence, the extent to which the devotional cult to Moses flourished in the rest of Venice is impossible to gauge.

The Church of San Moisè

The most observable evidence for Venice's unusual reverence for the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament is the presence of churches dedicated to these "saints": San Daniele (destroyed nineteenth century), San Geremia, San Giobbe, San Moisè, San Samuele, San Simeone and San Zaccaria. The Church of San Moisè in

²⁹ Vittorio Peri, "Chiesa e cultura religiosa," *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 1 (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1976) 181.

³⁰ The significance of this date remains unclear. There is no apparent Christian reason to link Moses with this date. Similarly, the Jewish calendar offers no explanation. Passover and the festival of Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost), which commemorates the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, are the Jewish holidays that have tangential links with the prophet. However, both take place in the spring.

³¹ Giuseppe Cappelletti, *Storia della chiesa di Venezia*, vol. 3 (Venice, 1853) 497-502. Nina Gockerell, *Kirchen mit Alttestamentarischen Patrozinien in Venedig: Materialien zu Geschichte und Ikonographie der Kirchen S. Giobbe, S. Geremia, S. Moisè, S. Samuele, S. Simeone und S. Zaccaria*, Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani 11 (Venice: Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani, 1978) 48-49. Don Silvio Tramontin, "Il 'kalendarium' veneziano," in Tramontin, *Culto dei santi* 313.

³² Tramontin, "Il 'kalendarium' " 313.

³³ I am grateful to Father Costantini at the Church of San Moisè for kindly speaking to me about the veneration of Moses in Venice today.

Venice stands on what is now the Calle Larga di XXII Marzo in the *sestiera* of San Marco just beyond the Piazza. A church dedicated to Moses stood on the site since at least the tenth century. Sansovino places the founding date of the church much earlier at 796 under the patronage of the Scopara family.³⁴ The church was later refurbished under the benefaction of Mosè Veniero.³⁵ The present architecture and exterior decoration date from the second quarter of the seventeenth century under the sponsorship of the Fini family.³⁶

It is difficult to trace the roots of the Venetian veneration of Moses that gave rise to the building of a dedicatory church. Nina Gockerell, in her comprehensive study of Venetian churches devoted to Old Testament patrons, notes that there is only evidence of a specific veneration to Moses in Syria in the fifth or sixth century.³⁷ Churches dedicated to Moses existed at the St. Catherine Monastery at Mount Sinai and in Split on the Dalmatian coast. Although the latter, originating from the twelfth or thirteenth century, may have emerged from the already established veneration to Moses in Venice, there are no known links between the two.³⁸

³⁴ Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare* (Venice, 1581) 44v. See also Flaminio Corner, *Notizie Storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia, e di Torcello* (Padua, 1758) 204.

³⁵ Sansovino, *Venetia* (1581) 44v. *Cronica Veneta* (Venice, 1736) 245 (qtd. in Gockerell, *Kirchen* 52): "La Ch[iesa] parrocc. Colleg. di s. Moisè Prof. detta s. Mosè edificata dell'An. 796. Dalla Famiglia Scopara, era prima intitolata s. Vittore M. ma riedificata da Mosè Veniero, fu allora dedicata a detto Profeta." The account in the *Cronica Veneta* has instigated some debate among scholars regarding the original namesake of the church: was Mosè Veniero attracted to fund the church of his patron saint or was the church of San Vittore Martire rededicated as a result of the benefactor's patron? Gockerell discusses this situation at length, concluding that the confusion of double patronage for the church results from a popular altar dedicated to the martyr saint that stood in San Moisè, possibly from the early eleventh century. Gockerell, *Kirchen* 52-54. For more on this debate, see Corner, *Notizie storiche* 204; Cappelletti, *Storia* 2: 400; C. Candiani, "Antichi titoli delle chiese," in Tramontin, *Culto dei santi* 106; and Niero, "Culto dei santi" 168.

³⁶ Corner, *Notizie storiche* 205.

³⁷ Gockerell does not provide a source for this evidence. Gockerell, *Kirchen* 56. Syrian christology regards the holy man as a *Moyses redivivus*, someone capable of controlling his passions in a place of trial, like the desert. Sergei Hackel, ed., *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (London: St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1981) 32.

³⁸ Gockerell, *Kirchen* 56. Niero, "Culto dei santi" 168.

The physical church is today a monument of baroque splendor. The heavily sculpted façade was designed by Alessandro Tremignan and constructed by Heinrich Meyring and is devoted to the glorification of the Fini family (fig. 1).³⁹ The church interior focuses on Moses. In addition to a ceiling fresco of Niccolò Bambini's *Moses and God the Father in Glory* (mid seventeenth century; fig. 106), the church decoration includes most impressively of all the main chapel. The high altar, also designed by Tremignan and constructed by Meyring, is a monumental marble composition of *Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law* with a frescoed backdrop of angels in the heavens (mid seventeenth century; fig. 133).⁴⁰ The altar itself displays a relief by Meyring of the *Worship of the Golden Calf* (fig. 134). To the left and right walls of the chapel were added somewhat later Antonio Pellegrini's *Brazen Serpent* (1707-08; fig. 163) and Girolamo Brusafferro's *Crossing of the Red Sea* (1706). Finally, encircling the chapel is a carved wood choir displaying in each of sixteen stalls a scene from the Exodus narratives (fig. 234).⁴¹

³⁹ See Umberto Franzoi and Dina di Stefano, *Le chiese di Venezia* (Venice: Alfieri, 1976) 318-21.

⁴⁰ In the 1663 edition of Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima*, Giustiniano Martinioni does not mention any artwork dedicated to Moses at San Moisè. Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, ed. Giustiniano Martinioni (Venice, 1663) 112. See also Gockerell, *Kirchen* 50.

⁴¹ The carved wood scenes in the choir stalls do not follow the narrative chronology of Exodus and Numbers. They are, from the right leading to the altar: *Basket Put into the River*; *Moses Trampling the Crown of Pharaoh*; *Moses Burying the Egyptian*; *Moses at the Well with the Daughters of Jethro*; *Burning Bush*; *Moses before Pharaoh*; *Moses Turns His Staff into a Snake before Pharaoh*; and *Moses before a Burning Altar*. It is unclear which story this last scene is meant to represent. Given the tents in the background, it must portray an event after the escape from Egypt. It could be the anger of Moses after his return from Mount Sinai. However, the appearance of God the Father in the sky above would be an unusual addition to this scene. From the back of the altar leading to the left, the scenes are: *Presentation of the Priestly Vestments and the Decoration of the Sanctuary*; *Passover*; *Passage through the Red Sea*; *Water from the Rock*; *Miracle of the Quails and the Gathering of Manna*; *Reconnaissance of Canaan*; *Brazen Serpent*; *Moses Shown the Promised Land*.

Moses as Connection between Venice and the East

The veneration of Moses and other Old Testament saints in Venice confirms the city's Byzantine roots and, as a result, help to define the city and its heritage as intrinsically separate from that of mainland Italy.⁴² In addition to the local cult of Moses that gave rise to a titular church, were also more subtle associations with ancient Byzantium. A key example of this is the marble relief of the Madonna and Child located in the Cappella Zen at San Marco (figs. 3 and 96). The image itself is fairly standard: the Virgin sits on a cushioned throne; she holds her son, depicted as a man-child, standing on her lap; two angels appear at either side of her head. The accompanying inscription is somewhat more unusual. It reads: "Acqua quae pius ex petra miraculosè fluxit oratione Prophetæ Moysis producta est; nunc autem hic Michaelis studio labitur, quem serva Christe, & coniugé Irenem."⁴³ A misreading of the quote led to popular belief that the panel was made from the Rock of Horeb, which Moses struck with his staff, producing a river of water for the thirsty Hebrews on their journey through the desert.⁴⁴ The four small holes at the lower right of the panel suggested water spouts and appeared to confirm this belief.⁴⁵ However, the link with Moses and the sacred origin of the relief material was only part of the importance of this relic for the

⁴² For the veneration of Old Testament saints as distinguishing Venice from the mainland cities, see Peri, "Chiesa e cultura religiosa" 180 and Silvio Tramontin, "Problemi agiografici e profili di santi," in Franco Tonon, ed., *La chiesa di Venezia nei secoli XI-XIII*, Contributi alla storia della chiesa di Venezia 2 (Venice: Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1988) 155. Cf. Gockerell, *Kirchen* 74. Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) 93.

⁴³ "The water which Moses once produced from a rock by his prayer flows now by the efforts of Michael, whom Christ may protect together with his consort Irene." Otto Demus, *The Church of San Marco in Venice* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1960) 187. Demus suggests that the panel served originally as a dedicatory icon for an aqueduct or a fountain.

⁴⁴ Sansovino, *Venetia* (1581) 33r. William Wey, *The Itineraries of William Wey, Fellow of Eton College, to Jerusalem, A.D. 1458 and 1462, and to St. James of Compostella A.D. 1456* (London, 1857) 53. Nicolò Dolgioni, *Le cose notabili et meravigliose della città di Venezia* (Venice, 1666) 223, qtd. in Gockerell, *Kirchen* 50-51.

⁴⁵ The four holes were probably intended for affixing a bronze appliqué. Demus, *Church of San Marco* 187.

Venetians. Equally significant was its provenance: the East. After recalling the legendary origin connection with Moses, Nicolò Dolgioni, in his *Le cose notabili et meravigliose della città Venetia* of 1666, highlights the more recent source of the relief, Constantinople: “et furon portate da Costantinopoli ne’tempi, che caddè nel potere de Venetiani quella Città, come altre volte vi hò detto....”⁴⁶

In the context of San Marco, the relic of Moses’ rock was one object among a collection of articles of Eastern origin, most plundered during the Fourth Crusade in the thirteenth century, that provided a tangible link with the city’s Byzantine heritage. Patricia Fortini Brown suggests that the Venetians had a clear strategy in accumulating objects linked with their Byzantine past, objects that implied antiquity and historical authority. Collecting and displaying these objects was a mechanism for cultivating a historical identity, one independent from that of the Latin West.⁴⁷ As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, the Venetian understanding of Moses continued to be even in the Renaissance a means of distinction from the other great Italian cities.

Moses and the San Marco Atrium Mosaics

One of the oldest surviving monumental cycles of Moses in Italy is Venetian: the Moses cupola located in the atrium of San Marco, the state church of Venice and private chapel of the doge (fig. 9).⁴⁸ The atrium was one of the key structural and

⁴⁶ Dolgioni, *Le cose notabili* 223, qtd. in Gockerell, *Kirchen* 50-51.

⁴⁷ Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1996) 11-13. For a discussion of the theory of collecting, particularly in the West, see Mieke Bal, “Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting,” *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion, 1994) 97-115.

⁴⁸ Early monumental cycles of Moses were located in Rome in Old St. Peter’s, San Paolo fuori di mura and Santa Maria Maggiore, and in Ravenna at San Vitale (figs. 24-27). As at San Marco, the Moses cycles in Rome and Ravenna were part of larger programs.

decorative embellishments to the original eleventh-century church made after the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Wrapping around the northwest corner of the building, the atrium articulates a lavish ceremonial entrance from the Piazza with six golden mosaic cupolas exhibiting the key stories from the Pentateuch. These represent, in narrative order from the south dome, the Creation of the World, the story of Abraham, three stories of Joseph and the story of Moses. The last is dated by most scholars to the late eighth or early ninth decade of the thirteenth century.⁴⁹

Arranged in a counter-clockwise sequence along the circumference of the cupola, the scenes include the distinctive moments of Moses' early biography.⁵⁰ They range from the moment the baby Moses is set adrift in his basket along the River Nile, through his sojourn into Midian and up to the point that he encounters Yahweh at the burning bush (figs. 11-20). Set in a field of gold, one story blends into the next in a continuous narrative with Latin quotations located above each scene to explain, in a very general fashion, the action that takes place below. In the accompanying apse above the Porta dei Fiorii, the desert miracles—the *Fall of Manna and Quails* and the *Water from the Rock*—are portrayed, again in continuous sequence, below a vast field of gold and a slim blue crescent to indicate the heavens (fig. 21). The south lunette portrayed originally the *Passage through the Red Sea* and the *Song of Miriam*. However, these were replaced by a seventeenth-century mosaic of the *Passage*

⁴⁹ The most comprehensive study of the atrium mosaics, including references to key preceding analyses, remains Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*, 4 vols. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984). Additions to Demus's scholarship are Bruno Bertoli, ed., *I mosaici di San Marco: Iconografia dell'Antico e del Nuovo Testamento* (Milan: Electa, 1986); Antonio Niero, "I mosaici della basilica di San Marco: Celebrazione della fede cristiana e della storia politica di Venezia," in Tonon, *La chiesa di Venezia* 179-206; Wladimiro Dorigo, "The Medieval Mosaics of San Marco in the History of the Basilica" in *San Marco: Patriarchal Basilica in Venice* (Milan: Fabbri, 1990) 31-65; Antonio Niero, "The Iconographic Plan of San Marco," in *San Marco* 69-79; Niero, "The Cycle of the Atrium," in *San Marco* 195-203; and Thomas E.A. Dale, "Reliquie sante e 'praedestinatio': Venezia come popolo santo

through the Red Sea based on a cartoon by Pietro Vecchia.⁵¹ All that remains today of the original lunette mosaic is the inscription.

The cycle focuses on the hagiographic portion of the Exodus text, the period from Moses' birth to his calling at the burning bush. A standard Byzantine cycle would more likely focus on the desert miracles and use them as typologies for the Eucharist.⁵² At San Marco, however, the miracles of manna and quails and water from the rock are set off in the apse, forming an epilogue to the central story of the raising of Moses as leader of the Hebrews. Without an immediate typological reference, the narratives of grace and salvation delivered to the Chosen People in their journey to the Promised Land play out simply as episodes in the life of Moses. Kneeling before the sanctuary, Moses gives thanks to God for answering his prayer. Like the cupola scenes the emphasis in the apse mosaic is the relationship between God and Moses.⁵³

The stylistic representation of Moses also emphasizes his closeness to God, his saintliness. Moses is portrayed in the type maintained in the Eastern Church (fig. 10).⁵⁴ He is a young man in robust physical condition, clean-shaven, nimbed and wearing a simple tunic and sandals. Carrying only a staff, he is the simple shepherd,

nel programma marciano del duecento," *Storia dell'arte marciana i mosaici*, ed. Renato Polacco, Proc. of Convegno internazionale di studi, 11-14 October 1994, Venice (Venice: Marsilio, 1997) 146-56.

⁵⁰ For the layout of the entire north wing, third bay program, see Demus, *Mosaics* 2: 90-91.

⁵¹ It is unclear if the original lunette mosaics were still visible in the sixteenth century. See Demus, *Mosaics* 2: 90.

⁵² Demus, *Mosaics* 2: 94-95. It is likely that both iconography and style of the atrium mosaics stem from Byzantine miniatures. However, unlike the famous Genesis Cycle at the narrative head of the atrium, which has been shown to be based on the fifth- or sixth-century *Cotton Bible*, the Moses cupola has yet to be linked conclusively with any one source. See also Kurt Weitzmann, "The Genesis Mosaics of San Marco and the Cotton Genesis Miniatures," in Demus, *Mosaics* 2: 105-42. Early traditions suggest that the iconographer of the entire San Marco program was either Joachim of Fiore, who supposedly came to Venice in 1070, or Jacopo Venetico, the Greek. See Sansovino, *Venetia* (1581) 33r.

⁵³ In this sense, the apse mosaic is similar to the account in the *Antiquities* where Moses' closeness to God is the central point. Josephus, *Antiquities* 3: 1.5 and 3: 1.7.

⁵⁴ A comparable monumental model of this figure type was available in Ravenna, San Vitale (figs. 24, 26-27).

the vulnerable man who wanders into the wilderness without the protection of arms. His defenselessness points up his special protection by God, his saintly intimacy to the Almighty.⁵⁵

The inclusion of the *Trial of Moses* calls especial attention to the hagiographic motive of the cupola. This story is not scriptural but instead originates in an apocryphal Hellenistic Jewish account compiled in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (2: 9.7) with later variations found in Jewish, Byzantine, western Christian and Islamic literature and art.⁵⁶ Pharaoh is anxious that the Jewish child whom his daughter saved from the river may presume to be king one day.⁵⁷ At the advisement of his scribes, he puts the young Moses to the test. In the mosaic, Pharaoh, in the guise of a medieval king, stands with his attendants and guards in front of the fanciful Egyptian palace. The child Moses stands before them as two young men present to him a lump of gold and a burning coal. As the inscription above reads, *hic probavit Moyses scienciam vel puericiam*: here Moses demonstrated [to Pharaoh] discernment or childishness. If the child reaches for the gold, this would indicate that he had pretensions to greatness. The mosaic does not reveal the end of the story: by God's intervention Moses reaches for the coals.⁵⁸ Pharaoh, unaware of the Divine action, is satisfied with Moses' innocence and allows him to continue with his education in the Egyptian palace. Thus, Moses goes on to become the leader of the Hebrews.

⁵⁵ "The holy man of West Asian society proved the power of his god and the authenticity of his closeness to his god by carrying neither weapons nor shield and living without bodyguards—in a society where all men of consequence had such protection." Silver, *Images* 35.

⁵⁶ There is no clear literary or pictorial model for the San Marco mosaic. Gutmann, "Testing of Moses" 107. See also n. 20.

⁵⁷ The root of Pharaoh's anxiety about Moses differs according to the literary sources. Josephus suggests that Pharaoh placed his crown on the young boy's head and Moses flung it off and trampled on it. Other sources report that Moses took the crown and put it on his own head or that he pulled the beard of Pharaoh. For a complete review of the sources, see Gutmann, "Testing of Moses" 107-17.

The iconographic program of the cycle continues to be a point of some debate: how does the Moses cupola, as well as the Old Testament atrium program as a whole, work in the context of the entire basilica program?⁵⁹ Sansovino, in his brief description of the atrium mosaic cycle, notes that “sopra le quale historie di sotto & da i lati, è scritta la loro significatione con versi, & spesso vi si leggono profetie delle cose future.”⁶⁰ The part that Moses plays in prophesizing the things of the future can be read in two ways: in the theological sense and in the Venetian sense.

As the last cupola in the atrium cycle, the Moses narratives inaugurate the journey to the Promised Land. Moses leads the way to the interior of San Marco with its focus on imagery of the New Testament. In the eschatological sense, then, the Moses cupola takes its place in an accumulation of figures and narratives pointing to the salvation offered by Christ.⁶¹ As in Tintoretto’s *Paradise* in the Maggior Consiglio of the Ducal Palace (fig. 214), Moses is one figure among many saintly men and women, his life incorporated into a wider network of holiness. At San Marco, the biography of Moses draws its meaning from its place within a wider picture of the history of salvation.

In Venice, however, a certain terrestrial salvation was believed to exist within its own borders. The idea of Venice being its own Promised Land is a topic that will be addressed in both Chapters 2 and 3. In the context of the Moses cupola at San

⁵⁸ In some literary traditions Moses reaches for the gold but the Angel Gabriel pushes his hand toward the hot coals. Moses then places the coal or his hot fingers in his mouth and burns his tongue, thus explaining his slow speech (Exod. 4: 10). See Gutmann, “Testing of Moses” 109-11.

⁵⁹ The iconographic program of the cycle is difficult to determine due to repeated reworking of the interior decoration of San Marco. While the mosaic cycles at San Marco demonstrate a tendency for a “correct” Byzantine iconographic program, any cohesive program that may have once shaped the meaning of the mosaics has been obscured by twelfth- and thirteenth-century Venetian taste for opulence and subsequent renovations. Dorigo, “Medieval Mosaics” 31, 48-50.

⁶⁰ Sansovino, *Venetia* (1581) 33r.

Marco, however, this idea had a special significance. Like Moses who came out of Egypt to journey towards Canaan, the relics of St. Mark had made their own movement—the *translatio*—from Alexandria to final peace in Venice. The stories of the Old Testament prophet and the Gospel writer were mutually reinforcing.⁶² For Venetians the cupola scenes of Moses in Egypt were reminders of both theological and personal significance.

Conclusion

The background to Moses in Venice emerges from two strains: the common Judeo-Christian tradition and the uniquely Venetian tradition with its Eastern roots. Both strands balance the hagiographic perspective to Moses and the theological approach to Moses as symbol of the Chosen People. It is the combination of these strands that sets Venice apart amongst the Italy city-states of the Renaissance and that influences the sixteenth-century imagery that will be the focus of the core of this thesis.

⁶¹ It has been suggested that the inclusion of so many figures in the San Marco mosaics indicates the role of each individual in the history of salvation. Dorigo, “Medieval Mosaics” 31.

⁶² For more on the mosaics of San Marco, particularly those referring to the stories of St. Mark and the Old Testament narratives, as underlining the idea of Venice as the Promised Land, see Dale, “Reliquie sante” 146-56. The three cupolas of Joseph also focus on Egypt, providing with the Moses cupola a four-step progression from Egypt to the Promised Land. Demus, *Mosaics* 2: 97-98. Niero, “Cycle” 196, 200.

Chapter 2

The Political Model: Images of Moses in Venice and on the Italian Peninsula

Introduction

Moses was a common model for the head of state and the concept of law in Renaissance Italy. Emerging from the political philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, this understanding of the Old Testament prophet was multivalent: he is at once a monarch, a republican and a custodian of civic virtue. Different regimes, according to their political tendencies, could selectively interpret and emphasize these various aspects of Moses as leader.¹ Furthermore, the intrinsic Judeo-Christian pedigree of Moses appealed to the Renaissance ruler who was required in his public persona to balance temporal power with religious virtue.

In order to establish what was significant about the Venetian approach to Moses in the later sixteenth century, it is necessary to reflect on the contemporary iconography of Moses from central Italy, particularly from Florence and Rome. As presented in Chapter 1, there are two sides to the understanding of Moses in the Judeo-Christian tradition: the biographic and the theological. The political traditions of the states determine which aspect of Moses is emphasized in civic discourse and art. This is ultimately what distinguishes Venice from her central Italian counterparts.

¹ Christian Europe has throughout history relied on the figure of Moses as a malleable type for government, leadership and law. For the emulation of Moses in early Germanic law, see P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood, eds., *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds: U of Leeds, 1977) 131-32, 138. For the image of Moses and French law 1789-1848, see Jonathan P. Ribner, *Broken Tablets: The Cult of the Law in French Art from David to Delacroix* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993).

Moses and the Political Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas

The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas (1224/6 – 1274) was the first analysis of Moses and the Law as a political model to have a lasting impact in the Christian West.² In Venice alone, the *Summa Theologica*, which contained his political arguments, was published at least fourteen times from 1477 to 1593.³ Aquinas begins his argument by praising the beauty of the order of the people of Israel. Since such beautiful ordering depends on the right establishment of rulers, he proposes that, therefore, the Law made the right provision for the establishment of government.⁴ With reference to the Exodus narratives, Aquinas deals with two key issues: the advantage of mixed government and the necessity of a virtuous ruler.

Based on the model already conceived in the secular thought of Aristotle, Aquinas' ideal government is a compound of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy:

The best form of government is to be found in a city or in a kingdom in which one man is placed at the head to rule over all because of the pre-eminence of his virtue, and under him a certain number of men have governing power also on the strength of their virtue; and yet a government of this kind is shared by all, both because all are eligible to govern and because the rulers are chosen by all.⁵

² Dino Bigongiari, introduction, *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, by Thomas Aquinas (New York: Hafner, 1981) xxix. Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law, and the Growth of Constitutional Thought 1150-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 88.

³ The *Summa Theologica* was published in whole or in part in Venice in at least 1477, 1478, 1479, 1480, 1483, 1484, 1486, 1489, 1490, 1493, 1495, 1496, 1588 and 1593. British Museum, *Short-Title Catalogue* and British Library, *Supplement*. For a discussion of the Thomist legacy to the age of the Counter Reformation, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978) 135-73.

⁴ This and subsequent quotes and references to Aquinas on Moses are from *Summa* I-II, Question 105. Aquinas, *Political Ideas* 87.

⁵ Aquinas, *Political Ideas* 88. For a concise discussion of Aquinas' interest in Aristotle, see Fergus Kerr, "Thomas Aquinas," *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G.R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 206-10.

Aquinas goes on to explain that this best form of government was established in the first place by divine Law:⁶

For Moses and his successors governed the people in such a way that each of them was ruler over all, so that there was a kind of kingdom. Moreover, seventy-two men were chosen, who were elders of virtue; for it is written: “I took out of your tribes men wise and honorable, and appointed them rulers,” [Deut. 1: 15] so that there was an element of aristocracy. But it was a democratical government in so far as the rulers were chosen from all the people; for it is written: “Provide out of all the people wise men,” etc. [Exod. 18: 21] and, again, in so far as they were chosen by the people; wherefore it is written: “Let me have from among you wise men,” etc. [Deut. 1: 13] Consequently it is evident that the ordering of the rulers provided for by the Law was the best.⁷

Aquinas’ argument established the ideal assimilation of the sacred and the secular in the political sphere, a policy that, as we will see, was especially attractive to Renaissance political rhetoric. It provided a means for the people of these city-states to view themselves as the new Chosen People, the New Jerusalem.⁸ In following the model of the most perfect constitution—one instituted by God himself—these political systems provided an identifying link with the ancient Israelites. As will be discussed shortly, this point could be exploited in a variety of ways.

⁶ Philo of Alexandria (c. 13 BC – 45/50 AD) also links the concept of mixed government with the government of Moses. However, Philo’s teaching did not stimulate the continuing tradition of thought that Aquinas’ works did. Tierney, *Religion* 88.

⁷ Aquinas, *Political Ideas* 88.

⁸ For other city-states claiming to be the new Chosen, see Muir, *Civic Ritual* 55.

However, Aquinas' next point on the role of the ruler, particularly the raising up of the ruler and his behavior in that role, was especially significant for Renaissance political self-fashioning. Aquinas suggests that it is precisely because the people are under the special care of God that the institution of the ruler is a decision reserved to God.⁹ He quotes Scripture: "The king whom you appoint to rule you must be chosen by Yahweh your God." (Deut. 17: 15) Aquinas is clear that, in order to avoid tyranny, the ruler must also be a man of virtue. As quoted earlier: one man is placed at the head to rule over all because of the pre-eminence of his virtue. Following Mosaic Law he prescribes further that the ruler must be temperate in wealth and possessions so as not to forsake justice; he must read the Law and fear God so as to remain obedient to the Law; and he must be charitable to his people so that they are encouraged to follow his example.¹⁰ As we will see, it is the analysis and understanding of the justice, obedience and charity of Moses that bears out the different Renaissance notions of Aquinas' ideal monarch, and, most importantly in this context, sets Venice apart from the other great Italian city-states.

Images and Ideas of Moses in Florence

Political discourse in Florence is a key source for the Renaissance understanding of Moses as a temporal leader. Three components of this discourse will be discussed here: Bronzino's painting for the Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo, Savonarola's preaching and Machiavelli's writings. Though each of these betrays its own emphasis and aim, when taken together, three main points emerge about the Mosaic leader in Florence: the autonomy of his rule; the goodness disposed to his people at his ascent

⁹ Aquinas, *Political Ideas* 89.

to power; and the severity of his justice. Underpinning the treatments of Moses as emblem of ideal leader is the notion of the Hebrews as emblem of an ideal Florence.

Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo

The Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo in the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence contains a cycle of Moses that is unique: it is presented neither with typological accompaniments nor within a larger Old Testament program. The Chapel was the private devotional space of Eleonora, the wife of Duke Cosimo de' Medici (1519-74). Located on the second floor of the palace, it was painted entirely by Agnolo Bronzino (1503-72) in 1541-43.¹¹

Arranged on the entrance and lateral walls, the Moses cycle depicts the *Crossing of the Red Sea and Moses Appointing Joshua* (south wall; fig. 119), the *Brazen Serpent* (west/entrance wall; fig. 118) and *Water from the Rock and the Gathering of Manna* (north wall; fig. 120). The last scene is accompanied by a *sopraporta* of *Angels with a Chalice, Host and Globe*. There are no inscriptions to explain the meaning of the scenes. The narratives, contained within arched fictive moldings mounted on columns, are depicted in a style that betrays the influence of Michelangelo's lucid lines and graceful anatomy on the Sistine Ceiling.¹² In addition

¹⁰ Aquinas, *Political Ideas* 89-90. See Deut. 17: 16-20.

¹¹ The comprehensive study of the Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo, including references to earlier studies, is Janet Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993). See also Janet Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino's *Crossing of the Red Sea and Moses Appointing Joshua*: Prolegomena to the Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo," *Art Bulletin* 69 (1987): 45-67. For a chronology of the frescoes based on recently discovered inscriptions and documents, see Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 54-73. For a general introduction to the images and the political iconography, see Charles McCorquodale, *Bronzino* (London: Jupiter, 1981) 72-76.

¹² For a thorough discussion of Bronzino's style in the Chapel of Eleonora, see Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 120-38.

to the Moses cycle on the walls, there are frescoes of saints in the vault (*St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, *St. Jerome in Penitence*, *St. John the Evangelist at Patmos* and *St. Michael Fighting the Devil*), of the Cardinal Virtues in the spandrels and of the *Lamentation* with *St. John the Baptist* and *St. Cosmas* at the altar wall (east wall).¹³

The Moses cycle in the Chapel of Eleonora focuses on the theological portion of the Exodus text, the period of the Hebrews wandering in the desert. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Gospel of John and the epistles of Paul use these stories from the Exodus as typologies for the acts of Christ. While a more standard format of pictorial types would match Old Testament with New Testament narratives, Bronzino's frescoes are matches for the sacraments of grace and salvation that took place and were preached about in the Chapel itself. This is most apparent in the *Water from the Rock* and the *Gathering of Manna*, which are linked by the scene of two putti holding a chalice and host above a globe. A scene such as the Last Supper need not be illustrated because it is, in fact, the Eucharist itself that forms the typological counterpart.¹⁴ Similarly, the *Brazen Serpent* with its cross prominently displayed at the center of the scene reflects the crucifix that would have been a part of the altar opposite and the *Crossing of the Red Sea*, as a type for baptism, emphasizes the themes of salvation and resurrection that are at the heart of Catholic teaching.¹⁵

Therefore, a sacramental meaning is fundamental to the program of the Moses cycle.

¹³ The original *Lamentation* at the altar wall is now in Besancon and has been replaced by a *Lamentation* and *Annunciation*. The *St. John the Baptist* is now in the J. Paul Getty Museum. The *St. Cosmas* is now lost. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 13.

¹⁴ There is no evidence that the Chapel of Eleonora was a chapel of the sacrament. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 228.

¹⁵ A *Crossing of the Red Sea* was painted by Giorgio Vasari for the baptism of Francesco de' Medici, heir of Duke Cosimo, in 1541. The *Crossing* together with a *Deluge* flanked the *Baptism of Christ*. Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 61. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 216.

However, in conjunction with the sacramental significance, there appears to be a strong political component to the cycle as well. This is suggested foremost by Bronzino's portrayal of the prophet. Moses appears three times in the pictorial narratives: striking the Rock of Horeb; commanding the Red Sea to close over Pharaoh's army; and appointing Joshua as his successor. In each of the three scenes, he is depicted as an older man with a wizened face and long, gray beard. Despite his age, his physique is rugged. He wears a heavy tunic and cloak. In the *Water from the Rock* and the *Appointing of Joshua* he carries a rod, reminiscent less of a shepherd's staff and more of a military commander's baton, and he is seated as if on a throne. This kingly posture is especially suggestive in the latter scene where Moses wears decorative military buskins and his subjects, some on bended knee, gather around him at his feet. Whereas the San Marco atrium cupola discussed in the previous chapter portrayed the vulnerable shepherd, who is dependent on God for protection and power, the Bronzino example represents a powerful ruler complete with all the accoutrements of leadership. Most notably, the Byzantine halo—sign of Moses' closeness to God, his saintliness—has been substituted in the Renaissance frescoes by two light rays emanating from his head, signs of the inherent power and authority of the man.¹⁶

¹⁶ The horns/light rays of Moses carry different significance depending upon the image. Here the rays of light are being read as a part of the costume and demeanor of a ruler: Moses wears rays of light like a helmet or a crown, a sign of his distinction among the Hebrews. This reading is in keeping with the ancient and Old Testament meaning of "horned," signifying glory, dignity, power, might, honor, victory, kingship, courage, defense, safety and salvation. For more on the meaning of "horned" in the ancient world, see Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses* 76-77. In other circumstances, the rays may be read as signs of spiritual transfiguration. See Chapter 4. Technically, Moses does not appear "horned"—*geren* in the original Hebrew and *cornuta* in Jerome's translation—until Exod. 34: 29 when he returns from Mount Sinai with the second set of tablets of the Law. However, the scriptural sequence was rarely observed. See Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses* 66.

The political iconography of the Chapel of Eleonora can, in fact, be read as devoted to the Medici. While Janet Cox-Rearick has already made a detailed study of the connections between the painting and Duke Cosimo, in this context the devices used in the Chapel images and Savonarolan and Machiavellian rhetoric are of key importance: the allegorical link with a specific individual; the emphasis on personal *virtù*; the harshness of justice; and the benefits that flow to the people as the result of the ruler's authority. Therefore, before continuing the discussion of the Chapel's political subtext, we must first address the Florentine discourses on Moses that preceded it.

Savonarola

The preaching of the Franciscan friar, Girolamo Savonarola (1452-98) communicates perhaps the most potent use of Moses as an archetypal political leader in the Renaissance. Initially, his attitude leaned toward a republican style of government, even offering Venice as a model.¹⁷ However, in the years leading up to his execution in 1498, the friar gained increasing attention as he developed in a radical way the responsibilities of the Chosen People and the duties of the Mosaic leader.¹⁸

¹⁷ "In Lombardia quoque nullus potest habere principatum perpetuum nisi per viam tyrannicam, duce Venetiarum excepto qui tamen temperatum habet regimen, quod quidem regimen ad tempus melius sustinetur in regione praedicta." (*De politia et regno*, 1480s) Girolamo Savonarola, *Scritti filosofici*, eds. Giancarlo Garfagnini and Eugenio Garin, vol. 2 (Rome: Belardetti, 1988) 466. See Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970) 308.

¹⁸ For a brief discussion of contemporary reactions to Savonarola's identification with Moses, see Alison Brown, "Savonarola, Machiavelli and Moses: A Changing Model," in Peter Denley and Caroline Elam, eds., *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein* (London: Committee for Medieval Studies, Westfield College, 1988) 63-64. References to Savonarola's sermons could also be found in Vasari's second edition of the *Vite* in the life of the artist Fra Bartolomeo della Porta (1475-1517). Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, 1568, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, vol. 4 (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-85) 178-79. For Savonarola's influence on Florentine artists, see Ronald M. Steinberg, *Fra Girolamo Savonarola, Florentine Art, and Renaissance Historiography* (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1977).

Savonarola on the Chosen People

Savonarola's preaching encouraged the Florentine self-understanding as a separate, chosen people of God. As already noted, the city's republican form of government offered a parallel with the ancient Israelites under the Law of Moses. The friar's sermons alluded increasingly to local politics to expand this self-perception and to stress the connection between the civic and moral life of the Florentines. Ultimately, the friar's aim was not simply to promote the idea of the Florentines as the Chosen People but to fully establish the New Jerusalem in the city.¹⁹

Savonarola made the allegory between contemporary Florence and the ancient Hebrews explicit by accentuating the key aim of the final four books of the Pentateuch: to mark out the separateness of God's Chosen People. As discussed in Chapter 1, God's election of the Hebrews as his own is established in the narratives of Exodus and Numbers and this special relationship is maintained by the Hebrews' adherence to God's laws as outlined in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The institution of the Chosen People begins most prominently with their escape from Egypt and it is precisely this story that Savonarola uses to highlight the special relationship between the contemporary Florentines and God. In 1497 he wrote:

Io gli elessi, dice il Signore, della terra dello Egitto. —Egitto vuole dire tenebre.... Ti ha cavato dello Egitto, *idest* di servitù, ha levato questo mano sopra di te. Sai ancora quante orazioni si fece per te, che tu fussi salva; e avendo tu pur fatto bene quanto alla parte buona, ti salvai, dice il Signore, e levai la mano mia più alta sopra di te e deliberai di cavarti di servitù e della

¹⁹ See Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence* 309-11.

tirannia di Faraone e porti *in terram fluentem lacte et melle*, cioè darti il latte per li piccolini, el mele per gli grandi, cioè cibo spirituale per ognuno, ovvero possiamo dire le grazie spirituale e le temporali; *egregiam inter omens terras*: io ho detto, dice il Signore, questo: di fare Firenze la più egregia terra di tutto il mondo. (*Prediche sopra Ezechiele*, 16 March 1497)²⁰

The darkness—the land of Egypt—from which the Florentines were delivered, is, of course, Medici rule.²¹ Whereas other cities, such as Venice, would view Egypt and Pharaoh as an outside influence from which to escape, Savonarola turns the metaphor inward: it is Florence's own history that it must break away from in order to journey to the Promised Land. Out of the hands of their own tyrannical Pharaoh, the people realize their true calling to be the most distinguished people of the world.

The Chosen must be vigilant in their adherence to God's laws in order to maintain their integral purity and assert their difference from others. Again, Savonarola appraises the moral state of the Florentines and demands that they purge themselves of sinners.²² In a fervent sermon in 1495, the friar advises the people to be severe in their righteousness in order to preserve their position as Chosen:

L'altra cosa che io ti voglio dire, Firenze, è che tu facci iustizia: lieva via e' giuochi, castiga il vizio sodomitico. Io vorrei pure vedere tre fuochi in piazza.—Oh, tu se' crudele, frate—. Crudele sei tu che per uno tristo vuoi

²⁰ Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Ezechiele*, ed. Roberto Ridolfi, vol. 2 (Rome: Belardetti, 1955) 260, 261-62. See also p. 265: "Populo ingrato, dice el Signore, non ti feci io passare il Mare Rosso senza sangue? Tu, Firenze, sei come quello populo mormoratore, che tutto el dì mormorava contro a Moyses."

²¹ The Medici were expelled from Florence in 1494.

²² From 1494 the public sermons intensify in their apocalyptic style, reminding the Florentines that their moral state would determine God's future treatment of them. See Donald Weinstein, "Explaining God's Acts to His People: Savonarola's Spiritual Legacy to the Sixteenth Century," *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation: Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus*, eds. John O'Malley, Thomas M. Izbicki and Gerald Christianson (Leiden: Brill, 1993) 206-07.

pericolare una città.... Nelli principii della legge bisogna sempre una servera iustizia; però, avendo tu fatto le buone legge, falle osservare massime ne' principii. Vedi Moisè, nel principio della legge fece morire uno solamente perché coglieva le legne el sabbato, e Iddio gli disse: —Lapidatelo—[Exod. 31: 12-17].... Voi siate pietosi e non vi accorgerete che la vostra è pietà crudele, se farete iustizia io vi dico che Iddio si placherà in verso di voi.

(*Prediche sopra i Salmi*, 12 July 1495)²³

By isolating categorically the sinner from the group, the cohesion and the inviolability of the Chosen People are reinforced. This was a standard stratagem for all groups who identified as God's elect. However, here it justifies the extreme punishment prescribed by God through Moses: even the most minor offense shall be disciplined severely in order that the sanctity of the group is safeguarded. Ironically, a more compassionate approach would be cruel. Savonarola's interpretation of the Chosen People is a strict and uncompromising one and relies on the weeding out of dissenters from within.

Savonarola on Moses as Ruler

Though Savonarola proposed that the Florentines were capable of embracing a popular government, he was also aware of their yearning for some kind of singular leader.²⁴ Like Aquinas, he believed that a king would only become a tyrant and

²³ Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra i Salmi*, ed. Vincenzo Romano, vol. 2 (Rome: Belardetti, 1969) 147-148.

²⁴ "El tuo reggimento dunque, Firenze, è simile a quello di uno iudice delli Israelliti. Io ti ho distinto el reggimento in tre parti, e dettoti che ogni governo o è di uno, e chiarmarsi regale, o è più nobili, e governo del populo ti è più naturale e più proprio che tutti gli altri. E anche ti voglio dire che questo reggimento e governo delli Ebrei, benché fussi popolare, perché il populo eggeva e il giudice non comandava, ma consigliava, *tamen* era ancora e potevasi chiamare governo regale, perché dependeva dalla bocca di uno, cioè di Dio perché Dio era quello che li reggeva, perché per la bocca del iudice e

therefore tried to persuade the people to take Christ as their king, effectively sealing their designation as the new Chosen People.²⁵ Nevertheless, he developed progressively the idea of an earthly Moses-like leader, who would speak with the veracity of God and rule with uncompromising justice.²⁶ Through his preaching Savonarola rewrote the Thomist idea of the virtuous ruler and reconstituted Moses into a commander of towering individual will. Most striking of all, the new Moses he proposes is the friar himself.²⁷

Though analogies were made between various Italian Renaissance leaders and Moses, Savonarola was extraordinary in the degree to which he made the parallel between himself and the Old Testament prophet. As will be addressed shortly in discussions of the pope in Rome and the doge in Venice, other leaders might be compared to the position Moses held as pastor and commander or simply to aspects of the prophet's virtuous character. For the friar, however, the identification went much further to incorporate the prophet's divine associations. Initially, he approached the subject with modesty, denying comparison to Moses: Io non sono degno d'essere comparato a Moisè. (*Prediche sopra i Salmi*, 25 January 1494 [1495])²⁸ However,

del profeta eran oconsigliati da Dio quello dovevano fare." (18 May 1496) Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea*, ed. Vincenzo Romano, vol. 1 (Rome: Belardetti, 1962) 107.

²⁵ "Orsù, Firenze, che vorresti tu, che capo, che re ti si può dare, che tu stia quieta? Io t'ho detto altra volta che non ad ogni luogo, nè ogni paese, gli è meglio un capo solo che governi, e Santo Tomaso lo dice, che in Italia e principi diventano tiranni, perchè qui abbonda sangue ed ingegno.... Orsù, Firenze, Iddio ti vuol contentare e darti uno capo ed uno re che ti governi. E questo è Cristo.... Tu sarai città gloriosa, e Cristo tuo capitano farà ogni cosa e tu sarai la reforma di tutta Italia ed ancora fuori della Italia. Sta con Cristo, Firenze, e non cercare altro capo." (27 December 1494) Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche italiane ai fiorentini*, ed. Francesco Cognasso, vol. 1 (Perugia: La Nuova Italia, 1930) 362, 363. See also Brown, "Savonarola, Machiavelli and Moses" 58-9 and Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence* 294-5.

²⁶ Providing an essential guide to Savonarola's political use of Moses is Brown, "Savonarola, Machiavelli and Moses."

²⁷ Savonarola compares himself to other prophets as well. See Brown, "Savonarola, Machiavelli and Moses" 60, n. 21.

²⁸ Savonarola, *Salmi* 1: 123.

when he later poses the rhetorical question, *O frate, che di' tu?*, he explains his true views:

Io sono imbasciadore, qua, mandato da Dio. Gli imbasciadori possono dire. Orsù, vegnamo al testo: —“Rispose Moisè al Signore: —e' non mi crederanno, e non udiranno la mia voce; ma diranno: el Signore no ti è apparito.—”(*Prediche sopra l'Esodo*, 7 March 1498)²⁹

Like Moses, he is an ambassador of God, initially unrecognized by his own people. Furthermore, as “ambassador,” Savonarola grants himself extreme power to act in the place of God: Lo imbasciadore può parlare in persona sua e in persona del suo signore che lo manda. (*Prediche sopra l'Esodo*, 18 March 1497 [1498])³⁰ While Aquinas recommended the ruler be obedient to the Lord and his Law, Savonarola claims to command the Law on behalf of God himself.³¹ This association between a specific individual and Moses is without comparison in the period for its radicalism. However, it also set a precedent for those who would make more moderate claims.

The manner in which he wields this self-proclaimed authority is also unique in its extremism. The more Savonarola claimed power for himself through his sermons, the more his portrayal of Moses—his alter ego—became characterized by the execution of brutal justice through allusion to the strict legislation on obedience in

²⁹ Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra l'Esodo*, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci, vol. 1 (Rome: Belardetti, 1955) 309. Savonarola believed that God had even greater plans for him than he had for Moses. Unlike the Old Testament prophet, who was denied the goal of the Promised Land, God wanted the friar to see his work through to completion: “Moisè, il quale aveva in cura el populo di Dio per condurlo in terra di promissione, per un poco di dubitazione che ebbe, quando cavò l'acqua della pietra, non entrò in terra di promissione: morì e non condusse l'opera al fine. Io sono peccatore grandissimo e ho fatto maggiori peccati, assai senza comparazione, *tamen* Dio, per sua misericordia e non guardando alli nostri peccati, non ha voluto guastare l'opera sua.” (27 November 1496) Savonarola, *Ruth e Michea* 2: 408-9.

³⁰ Savonarola, *l'Esodo* 2: 305.

³¹ By 1498 Savonarola's vision of the role of Moses as ambassador comprised prophet, judge and liberator. For the elision of prophet and judge, see the sermon of 18 May 1496, Savonarola, *Ruth e Michea* 1: 106-07.

Mosaic Law. There is a warning of the force of his terror when he compares himself to Moses smashing the tablets of the Law and destroying the golden calf, a symbol of Florentine “human wisdom.” (*Prediche sopra Giobbe*, 18 March 1495)³² In a later sermon Savonarola reinforces his portrayal of Moses’ militant leadership and the extent to which he calls for capital punishment. He is at his most zealous when he recounts Numbers 16, the punishment of Korah, the leader of the Levites who rebelled against Moses and presumed to be priests of the tabernacle. In a restyling of Scripture, the friar threatens those who doubt his position as a new Moses or, worse, suggest that they are his equals. (*Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea*, 3 July 1496)³³

Finally in 1498 the sermons took on exceptional urgency and peaked in their description of Moses’ mission of viciousness against those who would defy him. Despite threats of excommunication, Savonarola attracted great crowds to hear his

³² “Ho spezzato ancora io le tavole, come fece Moisè...e come Moisè destrusse il vitello dell’oro degl’Israeliti, così io ho destrutta e sbeffata la tua sapienza umana.” Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Giobbe*, ed. Roberto Ridolfi, vol. 1 (Rome: Belardetti, 1957) 293.

³³ The Florentines who covet their lost territory in Pisa, are compared to Korah and his followers, who yearn for more power than is allotted to them. Savonarola, *Ruth e Michea* 2: 66-67: “Io voglio che tu sappia che al tempo di Moisè si levarono su contra di lui cento cinquanta di quelli primi, de’ quali fu capo Core de’ figliuoli di Levi, e disseno a Moisè: —Noi vogliamo reggere ancora noi; non vogliamo che tu governi tutto questo populo a tuo modo—. A’ quali rispose Moisè: —State a vedere quello che farà Dio contra di voi—; e loro non vedevano, anzi mormoravano, dicendo: —Dove è la terra di promissione? È questa la terra che tu dicevi, che ci aveva a dare latte e mèle?—Così dicono costoro: —O frate, dove è Pisa che noi avamo a riavere?—E costoro dicevano a Moisè: —Noi vogliamo essere de’primi, come tu—. Allora Moisè andò al Signore e disse: —Signore, io ti priego che tu non risguardi li sacrifici loro, cioè di questi di Levi; tu sai, Signore, che da loro io non ho tolto mai pure uno asinello, e non ho afflitto mai alcuno di essi—. Allora el Signore apparve a Moisè e disseli: —Separatevi tutti da questa congregazione, perché io gli voglio distruggere—. E così Moisè fece discostare el populo da’ tabernaculi di coloro; missonsi in orazione, e Moisè disse al populo: —State a vedere, e se costoro morranno della morte consueta alli òmini, dite che il Signore non mi ha mandato; ma se morranno di mala morte, dite allora che il Signore m’abbi mandato. E la mattina, essendo discostatosi el populo da’ loro tabernaculi e avendo ognuno sacrificato, la terra si aperse e coloro furono assorti nello Inferno con li tabernaculi e con tutta la famiglia, e il foco del Signore ne consumò dugento cinquanta. Io vi ho detto, volpe, che voi avete el foco alla coda, e che voi cercate di accendere el foco in altri luoghi, ma che tornerà sopra di voi. Or sta’ a vedere; e se non sarà a questo modo di costoro, di’ allora che il Signore non mi ha mandato. A quel populo ebreo non bastò avere mormorato e avere veduto la punizione di coloro che furono asorti dalla terra; ma di nuovo mormororno e disseno che Moisè gli aveva morti. Per la qual cosa Dio, adirato con loro, ne ammazzò dodici migliaia.”

thoughts on the flight of the Hebrews from Egypt and the futile pursuit of Pharaoh's army.³⁴ On 3 March he preached on the story of Exodus 2: 11-12:

Moisè, fatto grande, andò alli suoi fratelli e truovogli tribulati dalli Egizii.

Questo vuole dire che io vi truovo adesso tutti afflitti e tribulati e scacciati per tutto.... Vide Moisè uno Egizio che percoteva uno Ebreo.... Guardò Moisè intorno intorno: che non fusse veduto, per ammazzare quello Egizio, e ammazzollo.... Or toglì, Egizio, questa cortellata. Morto che ebbe Moisè questo Egizio, "lo nascose nella terra"; cioè questi cattivi saranno ascosti e sepolti sempre ne' peccati; e non credere che mai si convertissino. Ecco ancora un'altra cortellata. Fatti inanzi Egizio: ecco la spada di Moisè che ti percuote. (*Prediche sopra l'Esodo*, 3 March 1498)³⁵

The Moses-figure carries the tribulations of his people and on their behalf kills the tyrant who lords over them and persecutes them. Savonarola intensifies the violence of the story as Moses stabs the Egyptian again and again, almost reveling in the brutality of the attack. There is no mercy shown. Indeed, the terrible justice that Moses wields is, for Savonarola, his glory. It is a harsh law exerted for the good of the people, for the *bene commune*.³⁶

³⁴ Joseph Schnitzer, *Savonarola* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1924) 474.

³⁵ Savonarola, *l'Esodo* 201, 202. For another example of Savonarola exaggerating Moses' violence, see the sermon of the first Sunday of Lent 1498, where he discusses Moses defending the daughters of Jethro (Exod. 2: 17). Savonarola, *l'Esodo* 1: 230-33. A painting of this subject by Rosso Fiorentino (Florence, Uffizi; c. 1523) has been linked with Savonarola's preaching. See Vivien Gaston, "The Prophet Armed: Machiavelli, Savonarola, and Rosso Fiorentino's *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988): 220-25.

³⁶ The concept of *bene commune*, the common good, dates back to Aquinas, through Aristotle: "...the Law should aim chiefly at things pertaining to the general well-being of the people." (*Summa Theologica*, I-II, Question 105) Aquinas, *Political Ideas* 87. Regarding the leader's purpose in maintaining the *bene commune*: "Further, just as priests are instituted for the benefit of the people in things concerning God...so are rulers set up for the benefit of the people in human affairs." Aquinas, *Political Ideas* 87. For the introduction of the issue of the common good into early Renaissance political thought, see Skinner, *Foundations* 1: 44-48, 58-59 and 60-65.

Savonarola's interpretation of the virtues of justice, obedience and charity that the Moses-like leader should possess was a drastic alteration of Aquinas' philosophy. Justice is severe and uncompromising. Obedience to God is made foremost to the leader—the ambassador. And charity is a result of the rigorousness of the justice.

Machiavelli

Niccolò Machiavelli's (1469-1527) few references to Moses pursue the model developed by Savonarola, that of the uncompromising ruler who willingly resorts to violence to maintain power.³⁷ Initially, he was interested in Moses' single-mindedness and in his perseverance. He makes this point in *The Prince*:

However, to come to those who have become rulers through their own ability [*virtù*] and not through luck or favor, I consider that the most outstanding were Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and others of that stamp. And although one should not discuss Moses, because he was merely an executor of what had been ordained by God, yet he should be admired even if only for that favor which made him worthy to speak with God.³⁸

In the tradition of humanist thought on virtue, Machiavelli makes a strong shift from Aquinas who asserted that a prince must rise to power because of the will of God.³⁹ Listing Moses among the great rulers of antiquity, Machiavelli asserts the prophet's ability to lead. He admires Moses for his *virtù*—his skill, his aptitude—as a ruler that

³⁷ Despite his radically different political interests, Machiavelli consciously adopted Savonarola's extremist language about Moses. Machiavelli understood "Moses' importance to Savonarola and hence his practical relevance to Florentine politics." Brown, "Savonarola, Machiavelli and Moses" 64-65.

³⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, eds. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 20.

³⁹ For the development of humanist thought on virtue, see Skinner, *Foundations* 1: 88-89.

was so great as to overcome *fortuna*.⁴⁰ Even though Machiavelli offers a disclaimer to Moses, suggesting that he was simply God's executor, he does praise him for his worthiness in this role. Again, this points to the importance of the man in achieving his position.

Machiavelli is, of course, making a comparison here between Moses and Lorenzo de Medici, (1492-1519).⁴¹ Though not published until 1532, *The Prince* was written in 1513 at the return of the Medici to Florence and dedicated to Lorenzo. After recounting the disasters of Italy, he indicates that the peninsula is ready for the glory that Lorenzo's leadership will hasten:

Very unusual events, which are signs from God, have recently been observed here: the sea has opened; a cloud has shown you the way; water has flowed from the rock; manna has rained down here. Everything points to your future greatness. But you must play your part, for God does not want to do everything, in order not to deprive us of our freedom and the glory that belong to us.⁴²

Lorenzo's leadership, like Moses before him, lays a path of miracles to the Promised Land. God has set the journey in place but a relentless leader is needed to guide the way. The link between the prophet and the Florentine is not nearly as fervent as in the

⁴⁰ The orphan Hebrew with the speech impediment could hardly rely on fortune for his rise to power. Like all good humanists who sought a place in public life, Moses was believed to have received a classical education, the foundation for the achievement of the Renaissance concept of virtue: "We have weighty authority, of both Luke [Acts 7: 22] and Philo that Moses was deeply learned in all the lore of the Egyptians. All the Greeks who have been considered the most excellent took the Egyptians as teachers: Pythagoras, Plato, Empedocles and Democritus. The saying of the philosopher Numenius that Plato was nothing but an Attic Moses is well known." Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 1489, trans. Douglas Carmichael (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965) 68. For the classical education as a foundation for virtue, see Skinner, *Foundations* 1: 88.

⁴¹ The Medici had used Old Testament figures as types for their political positions in the past. Before 1464, Donatello's *Judith* in the Medici Palace garden encapsulated both the princely justice and the republican humility of Cosimo il Vecchio (1389-1464). Matthew G. Looper, "Political Messages in the Medici Palace Garden," *Journal of Garden History* 12 (1992): 255-68.

sermons of Savonarola. Nevertheless, like the friar, Machiavelli looks forward to a Florence in glory brought about by a man who, though graced by God, retains the authority to rule within his own person.

In the *Discourses*, first published in Rome in 1531, Machiavelli describes in further detail Moses' capability to command and appeals more zealously to the themes of severe justice and justifiable brutality. Another radical departure from the Thomist notion of the benevolent prince, and again more in line with Savonarolan rhetoric, he describes a ruler who must take any action to secure the *bene commune*.⁴³

Machiavelli writes:

For it is the man who uses violence to spoil things, not the man who uses it to mend them, that is blameworthy.... I might adduce in support of what I have just said numberless examples, e.g. Moses, Lycurgus, Solon, and other founders of the kingdoms and republics who assumed authority that they might formulate laws to the common good. (*Discourses* 1.9)⁴⁴

In this passage, the grace of God plays no role as Moses assumes authority, presumably of his own will, and maintains a totalitarian hold on his kingdom for their "common good." In *The Prince* Machiavelli initiates the idea that to sustain this position above the people a leader must bear arms: "If Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus had been unarmed, the new order which each of them established would not have been obeyed for very long."⁴⁵ In Discourse 3 he pursues this idea further:

⁴² Machiavelli, *The Prince* 88-89.

⁴³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 1531, ed. W. Stark, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1950) 9. Thomists of the later sixteenth century would repudiate Machiavelli's attitude to the moral framework of political life, especially his claim that any action is justified for the preservation of the state. Skinner, *Foundations* 2: 143.

⁴⁴ Machiavelli, *Discourses* 1: 234.

⁴⁵ Machiavelli, *The Prince* 21.

He who reads the Bible with discernment will see that, before Moses set about making laws and institutions, he had to kill a very great number of men who, out of envy and nothing else, were opposed to his plans. (*Discourses* 3: 30)⁴⁶

The admiration that Machiavelli has for Moses' determination as a leader bears comparison to Savonarola's commentary on the punishment of Korah. Moses kills innumerable men without hesitation in order to enact his plans. Although lacking the startling passion of Savonarola's Moses as he stabs the Egyptian, Machiavelli describes a Moses who maintains composure at the inevitability of human slaughter and ultimately paints an equally gruesome picture of the leader of the Chosen People. In sum, like the friar, Machiavelli describes a Moses-like leader whose justice is severe; for whom obedience is to his law alone (there is no mention of obedience to God); and for whom charity—the common good—will result only from the autonomy of the ruler.

Conclusion: The Chapel of Eleonora

The three Old Testament scenes in the Chapel of Eleonora are the same three events noted by Machiavelli in the *Discourses*: the sea divided, the water flowing from the rock and the fall of manna.⁴⁷ While Christian tradition instructed that these be understood as signs of the sacraments, the Florentine political context prescribed these as signs of ensuing political greatness. Indeed, the emphasis of rule and order in the fresco cycle bears out the Florentine political rhetoric of Moses of the preceding fifty

⁴⁶ Machiavelli uses Savonarola as an example here, explaining that the friar clearly understood the danger of envy but nevertheless failed to deal with the problem properly. Hence his downfall. Machiavelli, *Discourses* 1: 547.

⁴⁷ Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 57. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 298.

years: the sovereignty of the leader; the cohesion of the people; and the severity of justice.

Just as Savonarola saw himself leading the Florentines out of the grasp of Medici rule and into the Promised Land, so too did Cosimo envision himself leading the Florentines into a new golden age of Medici rule. In the *Crossing of the Red Sea*, pictured at the background of the south wall, Moses stands at the water's edge with arms outstretched and his people gathered behind him. With no indication of divine intervention in the scene, his active and open posture suggests that the victory is his accomplishment alone. Indeed, the Red Sea story was used as an allegory for Medici victory at the Battle of Montemurlo on 1 August 1537, with Cosimo styled as a New Moses leading the battle against the Florentine exiles.⁴⁸ Like Savonarola's preaching about the Red Sea, the battle is fought against an internal enemy, the Egyptians personifying fellow Florentines. Simultaneously, it is the will of the leader that heralds the success that is the foundation of his leadership. At the foreground of the painting, that authority is underscored as Moses appoints his successor, Joshua. Again God does not figure in the scene and so the choice of the new Israelite leader appears to be vested solely in Moses.⁴⁹ The image establishes the autonomy of his rule and the supremacy of his authority.

However, the inclusion of the Cardinal Virtues in the spandrels implies that the power wielded by the leader is just and good. The *Brazen Serpent* indicates the severe punishment that justice shall serve on those who dissent, those who deny God

⁴⁸ Baccio Baldini, *Vita di Cosimo de' Medici, Primo Gran Duca di Toscana* (Florence, 1578), qtd. in Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 58. See also Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 302-10.

⁴⁹ Cox-Rearick has argued that the *Appointment of Joshua* alludes to the succession of authority from Cosimo to his son Francesco, thus establishing a new Medici dynasty. Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 59-61. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 301-19.

and, by implication, his ambassador. Meanwhile, the provision of food and drink portrayed in the *Water from the Rock* and the *Gathering of Manna* suggests the hope and new life that flow from good government.⁵⁰ Like Savonarola and Machiavelli's characterizations of the relationship of the leader and people, the extreme dichotomy of the two scenes indicates that, as a result of their response to their ruler, the fate of the people will be sealed because, above all, the will of their leader is supreme.

Images and Ideas of Moses in Rome

While political discourse in Florence is a key source for the Renaissance understanding of Moses as a temporal ruler, ecclesiastical discourse in Rome offers the understanding of Moses as a sacred leader. Three treatments of Moses in papal contexts will be discussed here: the Sistine Chapel wall program; Raphael's vault frescoes for the Vatican Logge; and Michelangelo's *Moses* for the tomb of Julius II. In all, the figure of Moses provides a strong theopolitical statement on apostolic succession and the primacy of the pope while the selective emphasis of different aspects of the prophet reflect the personal temperaments of individual pontiffs.

Sistine Chapel

The Sistine Chapel wall program includes the first monumental Moses cycle since the early Christian period.⁵¹ The architecture was completed by 1481 under the patronage of Pope Sixtus IV, della Rovere (1471-84) with the intention that it function as an

⁵⁰ Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 54. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 299-300.

⁵¹ For early Christian Moses cycles, see Chapter 1, n. 48.

exclusively papal chapel, a space to conduct papal liturgy.⁵² Work on the wall program began in 1481 under the supervision of Pietro Perugino and was complete in 1483. On the long north and south walls are respectively the *Life of Christ* and the *Life of Moses* (figs. 89-95).⁵³

The north and south walls of the Sistine Chapel are divided into four horizontal tiers. The Moses and Christ cycles are located on the third tier down from the top. The program includes six broad rectangular fields on each side containing multiple pictorial narratives set within landscaped surroundings and framed by painted classical pilasters. Arranged in an essentially chronological format from the altar wall, the narratives of Moses encompass the period from the prophet's young adult life in Egypt, his sojourn into Midian and the escape from Egypt, to the wandering in the desert and his death.⁵⁴ The series began originally on the altar wall with the *Finding of Moses*, destroyed in 1536 to make way for Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*. The series was also originally concluded by Luca Signorelli's *Archangel Michael Defending the Body of Moses* (Jude verse 9). This was repainted in the 1570s by Matteo da Lecce after the collapse of the east wall of the chapel (fig. 95).

⁵² For the architecture and construction of the Sistine Chapel, see John Shearman, "La costruzione della Cappella e la prima decorazione al tempo di Sisto IV," *La Cappella Sistina* (Novara: Istituto Geografico de Agostini, 1986) 22-30. For more on papal liturgy, see Carol F. Lewine, *The Sistine Chapel Walls and the Roman Liturgy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993) 17 and notes.

⁵³ The most comprehensive study of the Sistine Chapel wall cycles remains L.D. Ettlinger, *The Sistine Chapel before Michelangelo* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965). Supplementing Ettlinger's thesis, is a recent reading of the narratives in accordance with Lenten liturgy: Lewine, *Sistine Chapel Walls*. See also Shearman, "La costruzione della Cappella" 45-87.

⁵⁴ The scenes are: *Circumcision of Moses' Son* (Perugino and Bernardino Pinturicchio; fig. 89); *Moses in Egypt and Midian* (Sandro Botticelli; fig. 90); *Drowning of Pharaoh* (Cosimo Rosselli; fig. 91); *Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law and the Adoration of the Golden Calf* (Rosselli; fig. 92); *Punishment of Korah and Stoning of Moses* (Botticelli; fig. 93); *The Last Acts and Death of Moses* (Luca Signorelli; fig. 94). The placement of the *Circumcision of Moses' Son* before the *Travels in Midian* confuses the otherwise correct chronological order of the narrative fields. For more on the fifth scene in the series, see Adelheid Heimann, "Moses Shown the Promised Land," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971): 321-24.

The Sistine Chapel was not the only program of Moses imagery produced in the later fifteenth century. In the years just prior to the Chapel work, Benozzo Gozzoli was completing a Moses cycle as part of the decorative program at the Pisa Camposanto, the town cemetery.⁵⁵ Tracing human history under the old covenant, the scenes of Moses included the *Infancy and Miracles of Moses* (1478), the *Crossing of the Red Sea* (1478), *Moses and the Tablets of Law* (1479), the *Punishment of Korah* (1480), the *Rod of Aaron and the Brazen Serpent* (1481), and *Balaam and the Death of Moses* (1484). Only traces of these images remain today and the border inscriptions, which once explained the content of the narratives, were never transcribed.⁵⁶ Little can be said of the Camposanto Moses cycle because of their ruined state. However, stained glass windows showing the life of Christ once accompanied the frescoes, indicating the likely typological intention of the Camposanto scheme. In this way, both the Camposanto program and the Sistine Chapel walls relied on the fifth-century prototypes of Old Saint Peter's (demolished in 1506) and San Paolo fuori le mura, which established the use of typology on a monumental visual scale.⁵⁷ However, the Sistine Chapel wall program is unique in

⁵⁵ Benozzo Gozzoli supervised a workshop of artists at the Camposanto 1468-94. Construction of the Camposanto began in 1278 and decoration proceeded over more than two centuries. For a synopsis of the building history of the Camposanto, see Diane Cole Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996) 158-59.

⁵⁶ The humid climate of Pisa and the impermanent nature of the fresco materials caused the Camposanto program to be in poor condition by the mid seventeenth century. The program was nearly completely destroyed by bombing in 1944. For the conservation history of the frescoes and a reconstruction of the inscription from the *Infancy of Moses* made from old photographs, see Ahl, *Gozzoli* 162 and cat. 55.

⁵⁷ For the "tradition" of copies in Rome of the Old St. Peter's Old-versus-New Testament nave decoration, see Herbert L. Kessler, "'Caput et speculum omnium ecclesiarum': Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium," *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: Function, Forms and Regional Traditions*, ed. William Tronzo, Villa Spelman Colloquia 1 (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1989) 126. See also Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431-1600* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 196.

that it is the first known monumental cycle focusing on the life of Moses without inserting him into a broader Old Testament series.⁵⁸

Although comparisons have been made to miniatures in Byzantine Octateuchs and to Santa Maria Maggiore, there is no known source for the Sistine Chapel Moses cycle.⁵⁹ Indeed, the program presents a new and distinctive vision of the prophet. Though it does not focus exclusively on the hagiographic narratives of the first four chapters of Exodus, the cycle does emphasize the biography of the prophet overall. Like the San Marco atrium, it omits the desert miracles that provide sacramental typologies, such as those discussed with reference to the Chapel of Eleonora in Florence. Additionally, Moses' position as central protagonist in each of the narrative sequences indicates that the program aims to accentuate his role and his relationship to the Chosen People. Indeed, as L. D. Ettlinger has shown in his seminal work on the Sistine Chapel walls, the varying representations of Moses in the cycle highlight specifically the prophet's responsibilities as leader, legislator and priest.⁶⁰

The first three narrative sequences emphasize the role as leader. Moses is portrayed as a young man with a short beard. He carries a staff yet his long tunic and cloak suggest a social rank that is higher than the mere shepherd that he was. His closeness to God is indicated in the upper left corner of the second scene, where Moses engages in a face-to-face conversation with Yahweh at the burning bush. Without a Byzantine-style halo that would suggest a spiritual closeness to God, this conversation scene, particularly given the very human portrayal of God—he appears

⁵⁸ Lavin, *Place of Narrative* 198.

⁵⁹ Ettlinger, *Sistine Chapel* 43-56. Lavin, *Place of Narrative* 198.

⁶⁰ For the summary of the roles of Moses in the cycle, see Ettlinger, *Sistine Chapel* 75. The discovery of raised, gilded *tituli* found during cleaning of the cycle in 1970 confirms Ettlinger's thesis. See also Lavin, *Place of Narrative* 196.

simply as an older man in robes—implies more of a worldly affiliation: Moses takes on a diplomatic role rather than an exclusively holy one. As a whole, the first three scenes illustrate Moses' development in this vocation: he kills the Egyptian for maltreating one of his people; he receives the mission to lead his people from God; he seals the special relationship between God and the Chosen with the blood of circumcision; and he stands at the head of the Israelites, guiding them out of the land of their enemies. The mysteries of the dark clouds and rain that appear above the ruined Egyptian army are indications of Divine assistance to Moses who stands prominently at the fore of his people. Like the column of smoke that comes between the Hebrews and Egyptians, the scene divides the blessed and the evil.

In the fourth narrative scene Moses is portrayed as an older man, cutting a stout figure with a long white beard. Again he wears distinguishing robes and his closeness to God is depicted by his face-to-face exchange with the Lord, this time at Mount Sinai. This relationship is emphasized again at the lower left corner where, returning from Mount Sinai a second time, Moses' face shines with the radiance of the Lord, blinding the Hebrews. (Exod. 34: 29-30) Here, however, Moses' closeness to God relates specifically to his role as lawgiver. Cosimo Rosselli depicts God placing the tablets directly into the hands of Moses, indicating that the prophet is the designated keeper of God's Law on earth. The physical similarities in the depiction of Moses and God, particularly the flowing beard and hair, underscore the ambassadorial role—the standing in for God—that Moses assumes when he receives the tablets. The subsequent narratives then portray how he carries out his role as lawgiver, first smashing the tablets in anger and then delivering the Law to the Hebrews. At all

times, the centrality of the scene at Sinai reminds the viewer that these acts are done in the name of God.

In the fifth narrative the theme shifts again to point to Moses' role as priest. Moses is again depicted as an old man, wearing gold-trimmed robes. Here the wrath of the prophet, suggested in the slaying of the Egyptian in field two and in the breaking of the tablets of the Law in field four, is fully realized. In the central scene, Moses raises his rod and violently thwarts Korah and his followers in their mission to reach the tabernacle. To the left, the prophet raises his hand and the ground opens to swallow those who would presume to be priests. The inscription on the arch reads: NEMO SIBI ASSVMMAT HONOREM NISI VOCATUS A DEO TANQUAM ARON (Heb. 5: 4).⁶¹ In this sense, Moses subsumes the role of Aaron, the high priest. Aaron is positioned directly behind Moses in the composition, suggesting a conflation of the powers of the two men. The physical resemblance of the two men in visage and expression underscores this parallel.⁶² As a result, Moses is exalted as the true priest, who possesses the power to rebuke those who would claim to have similar sacred authority. This point is continued in the sixth narrative field where, at the left, Moses chooses Joshua as his successor. The deferential posture of Joshua, kneeling before the authority of Moses in the same way that Moses knelt before God at the burning bush, confirms the line of sacerdotal authority.⁶³

The lack of images of the miracles in the desert suggests that the typological connections between these images of Moses and the images of Christ opposite are not

⁶¹ "No one takes this honour on himself; it needs a call from God, as in Aaron's case."

⁶² Comparable to Botticelli's *Punishment of Korah*, a triumphal arch erected for Leo X's Lateran procession in 1513 displayed two representations of the pope with the inscriptions *tamquam Moyses* and *tamquam Aron*. John Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel* (London: Phaidon, 1972) 48-49.

based on a sacramental interpretation.⁶⁴ As Ettlinger's study shows, the three combined roles of Moses—leader, lawgiver and priest— emphasize his role at the formation of the synagogue in the same way that the images of Christ and St. Peter emphasize their fundamental roles in the formation and future of the Church.⁶⁵ These are, of course, the same roles reserved for the pope.⁶⁶ As Moses received the Law directly from God and passes on its authority to Joshua, so too does Christ bring the new covenant to the world and pass on its authority to Peter, the first Vicar of Christ. Thus the Sistine Chapel typology is between men: Moses as type for both Christ and the pope; *typus christe* and *typus papae*.

In line with Thomist philosophy, the Sistine Chapel wall frescoes assert that the pope, like Moses, is granted his authority by God. Like the Florentine imagery and thought on Moses, the Roman paintings also depict the steadfast obedience that the leader requires from his people and the primacy of his justice over them. However, the issue of charity appears to be disregarded in these scenes. While a secular duke was required to exhibit altruism to his people in order to maintain their confidence in him, in the strictly liturgical context of the papal chapel the head of the Church was under no obligation to win over the faith of his flock. The Sistine Chapel images can only affirm Moses' position relative to the Hebrews—and correspondingly the pope's position relative to the Church—because it is God who is the wellspring of charity.

⁶³ Ettlinger, *Sistine Chapel* 73-74.

⁶⁴ The series originally began on the altar wall with the *Nativity*. The following scenes, which remain, are: *Baptism and Beginning of Christ's Mission*; *Temptation*; *Calling of First Apostles*; *Sermon on Mount and Healing of the Leper*; *Charge to St. Peter*, *Stoning of Christ* (John 8: 59 and 10: 31) and the *Tribute Money*; *Last Supper and Passion Scenes*; *Resurrection and Ascension*.

⁶⁵ Ettlinger, *Sistine Chapel* 102.

⁶⁶ Ettlinger, *Sistine Chapel* 104-19. See also Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indian U P, 1985) 203.

Therefore, Moses signifies not so much the virtues of a particular leader as the power of an enduring institution of leadership.⁶⁷ He is an icon of papal authority.

Vatican Logge

A second prominent Moses cycle in Rome is part of the Logge program of the Vatican Palace. The Logge is on the third level of the Palace and was intended for the pleasure of the pope.⁶⁸ Work began initially under Pope Julius II and Bramante but was incomplete at the death of the architect in 1514.⁶⁹ Under the new sponsorship of Pope Leo X, de Medici (1513-21), son of Lorenzo *il magnifico*, Raphael began his designs for the project around 1514-15. It is unclear how much of a hand Raphael had in the final painting as he was certainly aided by assistants, including Giulio Romano.⁷⁰ The program includes extensive wall decoration of grotesques accompanied by thirteen vaulted bays, each dedicated to an important moment or a major figure in Biblical history: Creation, Fall of Man, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,

⁶⁷ It has been suggested that Sixtus IV, influenced by his Franciscan roots, chose Moses as a personal emblem. St. Francis referred to himself as Moses and his Order as the new Chosen People. St. Bonaventura and others made these parallels more explicit after Francis's death. See Rona Goffen, "Friar Sixtus IV and the Sistine Chapel," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (1986): 237-38 and Lavin, *Place of Narrative* 199-200. See also Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 65. However, the ideological theme of the pope as a new Moses was already developed in the papal court. Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita de Moysis* was introduced into papal circles in the mid fifteenth century and read as enhancing the authority of the pontiff. Stinger, *Renaissance* 211-12. Later works of art in Venice suggest that Gregory's work was read there with more of an eye to its mystical intent. See Chapter 4.

⁶⁸ The most important study of the Vatican Logge remains Nicole Dacos, *Le logge di Raffaello*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico, 1986). See also Bernice F. Davidson, *Raphael's Bible: A Study of the Vatican Logge* (University Park: Pennsylvania State U P, 1985) and Konrad Oberhuber, *Raphael: The Paintings* (Munich: Prestel, 1999).

⁶⁹ For bibliography on the construction and architecture of the Logge, see Davidson, *Raphael's Bible* 27 n. 1.

⁷⁰ Vasari, *Vite* 4: 362. Dacos, *Le logge* 181-82, 183-84, 187-88 and 189-90. Davidson, *Raphael's Bible* 30.

Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and Christ. The Moses story is the only cycle to occupy two full bays.

The first bay of the Moses cycle, the eighth bay of the program, includes three images of his rise to leadership of the Hebrews (*Finding of Moses*, *Burning Bush* and *Drowning of Pharaoh*; figs. 166-68) followed by the *Water from the Rock* (fig. 169). The *Gathering of Manna* is depicted in the *basamento* frieze.⁷¹ The second Moses vault exhibits the prophet's position as mediator between God and the Hebrews (*Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law*, *Worship of the Golden Calf*, *Communication with the Cloud* [Exod. 33: 9-11] and *Moses Presents the Second Tablets of the Law*; figs. 170-73). The ninth bay *basamento* was probably either the punishment of Korah or the punishment of the two older sons of Aaron, Nabad and Abihu. (Lev. 10)⁷²

As in the Sistine Chapel wall frescoes, the eighth and ninth bays of the Logge program present a biography of Moses. However, not only is he the protagonist of each narrative sequence, he is also quite literally at the center of each composition. This is most striking in the *Red Sea* where Moses, raising his staff high above the sea, appears to be the focal point of all the action in the scene. The Hebrews cluster close behind him, fanning out toward the shore. The column of smoke rises above his staff, mushrooming into dark clouds, while the sea sends out a reverse tidal wave, throwing the Egyptians into turmoil. Even though his face is obscured, there is no mistaking the primary significance of Moses in the pictorial narrative.

As the pivot of action, the prophet is above all else presented as a mediator between God and his people. This is particularly true in the scenes of the ninth bay. As Moses receives the tablets of the Law at Mount Sinai he looks directly into the

⁷¹ For an illustration of the *basamento* frieze, see Davidson, *Raphael's Bible* fig. 73.

face of God and the Hebrews look up to their leader. As he communicates with the cloud—the ghostly presence of God—in the camp, the people look on, waiting for the prophet to deliver the substance of the meeting. And as he descends from Mount Sinai with the word of God inscribed on the stone tablets, the Israelites bow in veneration to the covenant that is delivered. The Logge frescos cast a new light on Moses as mediator and this is initially presented during his rise to leadership in the *Burning Bush* scene. Unlike the Sistine Chapel version where God and the prophet communicate face-to-face—the same way that they will at Mount Sinai—the Logge rendering depicts a humble man before his God. In his simple shepherd's tunic, he kneels barefoot and covers his face with his hands. The inherent gentleness of his nature is recalled again at the *Worship of the Golden Calf* where, although he throws down the tablets in frustration, he exhibits none of the terrifying anger of the Rosselli fresco. While severity and ferocity underlay the authority of Moses in the Sistine Chapel, meekness characterizes his authority in the Vatican Palace.

Unlike the Sistine Chapel, which was a strictly liturgical space, the Vatican Palace embraced more easily the dual nature of the papacy as both a spiritual and a temporal authority. In this context, the Logge cycle incorporates the two papal responsibilities into its iconography. On the one hand the vault program presents the history of the world from Creation to Salvation.⁷² Viewed with an eye to Catholic tradition, then, the Moses bays present sacramental types, such as the *Red Sea* and the *Water from the Rock*, while also making the same typological connection between

⁷² Davidson, *Raphael's Bible* 80.

⁷³ When viewed in concert with the wall decoration of grotesques, the program as a whole presents the simultaneous history of both the pagan and Christian worlds. Dacos, *Le logge* 59-60. Davidson, *Raphael's Bible* 48.

Moses and Christ—and, by extension, the pope—as leaders of the people of God.⁷⁴

However, like the Chapel of Eleonora, these parallels also pick up on the virtues of the leader, including this time the virtue of charity.

The inclusion of the *Water from the Rock* presents most prominently the charitable aspects of the ruler. As in the *Red Sea*, Moses stands out from the crowd. Located at the center of the scene and moving forward with drapery billowing behind him, he reaches forth with his rod to the Rock of Horeb. Instantly, water sprouts forth. The people gathered behind him throw up their hands in praise of the miracle. Above, the vision of God in the clouds indicates the source of the miracle. While the Sistine wall narratives signified Moses ability to act with the authority of God, the *Water from the Rock* signifies Moses ability to act with the charity of God, to nurture as well as lead his people.

The story of the Water from the Rock would be used again for the next Medici pope, Clement VII (1523-34), this time on the small scale of a medal (Florence, Museo Nazionale; 1534).⁷⁵ Designed by Benvenuto Cellini (1500-71), the obverse depicts the profile portrait of the pope. The reverse portrays the Exodus narrative in a composition comparable to the Vatican Logge fresco (fig. 122). However, the emphasis on Moses is even greater. In addition to the crowd gathered behind Moses, looking up in amazement, Cellini adds a group at the left, falling on their knees and throwing up their hands seemingly to venerate Moses himself. Without the appearance of God, the medal suggests, like the Chapel of Eleonora frescoes, that the

⁷⁴ “The story of Moses is the story of Christ.... In one way or another, every scene [in the Moses bays] relates to the deepest significance of the frescoes in the last bay of the Logge.” Davidson, *Raphael's Bible* 74-75.

⁷⁵ John Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 54-55. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 299-300.

power of the miracle is located within the man. Inscribed VT/ BIBAT/ POPVLVS, the medal commemorates Clement's opening of a well in San Patrizio, Orvieto, which brought water to Rome.⁷⁶ Therefore, the image commemorates the man as both pope and generous earthly ruler.

With the inclusion of God above and the absence of Hebrews adoring him on their knees, Raphael's fresco presents a less self-assured image of Moses' generosity. Leo was, of course, compared to the Old Testament prophet with the hope that he would care for the people of God. When he was made pope in 1513, it was anticipated that he would be the antidote to his belligerent predecessor, Julius II. Whereas Julius was compared with Moses the maker of war, a point that will be discussed shortly, Leo was compared with Moses the gentle ruler.⁷⁷ His self-styling as a *rex pacificus* has been understood as a subtext in the adaptation of Moses the leader in Raphael's frescoes. From this perspective the water flowing from the Rock of Horeb symbolizes the peace and goodness brought about by Leo's reign as pope. However, reflecting the gentle nature of Leo, the mercy and charity that he delivers is made by the grace of God. The icon of authority set out in the Sistine Chapel is embedded in the Logge cycle but is tinged with the virtues of the individual pope.

Michelangelo's Moses

⁷⁶ "So that the people may drink." Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini* 54-55. Clement VII was also compared to Moses when he went to war with the Florentines in 1529-30 to recover Medici rule. Stinger, *Renaissance* 215.

⁷⁷ Dacos, *Le logge* 64. Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons* 15.

One of the most imposing Renaissance images of Moses is the monumental sculpture for the tomb of Julius II, della Rovere (1503-13) by Michelangelo (1475-1564).⁷⁸ The tomb went through several design stages. Originally intended as a four-sided, freestanding monument (1505), Michelangelo amended the project in subsequent designs (1513, 1516, 1532 and 1542) to function as a wall tomb.⁷⁹ The *Moses* was probably carved circa 1515 and was likely intended as a corner figure for the cornice of the 1513 tomb design.⁸⁰ The project was left unfinished for several years until, at the order of Paul III (1534-49), the *Moses* was finally installed in the central position of the tomb at San Pietro in Vincoli in 1545 (fig. 136).

Ascanio Condivi in his *Vita di Michelangelo Buonarroto* (Rome, 1553) describes the *Moses* as a “wise and pensive man...weary and full of cares.”⁸¹ His age and wisdom are reflected in his demeanor. He is clothed in a clinging toga and a cloak, which falls in heavy folds over his right knee. Under his right arm he holds tightly against his body the stone tablets of the Law. He looks off to his left with a

⁷⁸ Michelangelo's *Moses* has received considerable scholarly attention in the last two centuries. For a summary of the major discussions of the sculpture, see Umberto Baldini, *The Complete Sculpture of Michelangelo* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982) 49-50. For general sources, see Frederick Hartt, *Michelangelo: The Complete Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969) 156-63; Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (London: Allen Lane, 1975) 157-60 and 268-71; Linda Murray, *Michelangelo* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) 97-102; Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, ed. H.W. Janson (London: Phaidon, 1992) 88-90; and John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture*, 4th ed. (London: Phaidon, 1996) 81-86 and 103. Recent additions to the scholarship are Peter Armour, “Michelangelo's Moses: A Text in Stone,” *Italian Studies* 48 (1993): 18-43; Franz-Joachim Verspohl, “Apollonio's ‘Torso’ and Michelangelo's ‘Moses’—on the Exactness of the Artist,” *Daidalos* 59 (1996): 92-97; and Verspohl, “Der Moses des Michelangelo,” *Städel Jahrbuch* 13 (1991): 155-76. See also Sigmund Freud, “The Moses of Michelangelo,” 1914, *Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson, trans. James Strachey, The Penguin Freud Library 14 (London: Penguin, 1985) 253-82.

⁷⁹ For a brief summary of the Julius II tomb project, including design reconstructions, see the appendix in Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michelangelo*, 1553, ed. Hellmut Wohl, trans. Alice Sedgwick Wohl, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State U P, 1999) 113-18.

⁸⁰ The other corner figures of the 1513 project are anonymous. Baldini, *Complete Sculpture* 49. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* 88. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian High Renaissance* 86. Vasari notes that the corner figures of the 1505 design were meant to be Moses and St. Paul and allegorical figures of the Active and Contemplative Life. Vasari, *Vite* 7: 164.

⁸¹ Condivi, *Life of Michelangelo* 77 and 79.

commanding stare, holding back the snaking strands of his long beard. Although seated, the *Moses* is a dynamic figure.⁸² His large form ripples with muscles, particularly in his arms and shoulders where the complementary muscles flex and stretch. With one foot behind his seat, his body twists and raises up as if on alert.⁸³ The two stubby horns protruding just above his noble brow act like the rays of light in the image of the prophet in Bronzino's *Moses Appointing Joshua*: a sign of power and authority.

The impact of the *Moses* would have differed depending on its placement in the evolving tomb program. In the original plan the intensity of the figure would have been tempered by its position high on the corner of the cornice.⁸⁴ So too its meaning would have been subsumed into a much broader scheme of figures. However, the central positioning of the figure in the final, realized tomb program prompts focused attention to the impact of the figure on its own. Located on the lower tier, the *Moses* projects slightly forward of the allegorical figures of the *Contemplative Life* and the *Active Life* (begun 1542) positioned in the lateral niches. Busts of patriarchal figures flank the semi-domes of the niches. On the second tier, directly above the *Moses*, is the reclining effigy of Julius II by Maso di Boscolo surmounted by the *Madonna and Child* by assistants. These are accompanied by a seated prophet and sibyl at either side, also by assistants. The papal arms of Julius II rise above the architecture of the

⁸² The impression of the *Moses* as a dynamic yet seated figure has been compared to Michelangelo's similar treatment in fresco of the prophets and sibyls of the Sistine Ceiling. See Murray, *Michelangelo* 99.

⁸³ This active position of the figure has caused some scholars to suggest that Moses is caught in a moment just before springing into action. Jacob Burkhardt suggested that it is the specific moment that Moses realizes the Hebrews' idolatry of the golden calf. For a summary of these discussions, see Freud, "Moses" 258-61.

⁸⁴ The disproportionately large torso is likely explained by the original position of the sculpture on the upper cornice of the tomb. The raking angle of view would have demanded the legs be foreshortened

tomb on the central axis, linking visually the *Madonna and Child*, the figure of Julius II and the *Moses*. Although numerous interpretations of the statue have been proposed, based on the position of the *Moses* as the focal point of the central alignment of the tomb, the figure will here be considered as a personification of Julius II.⁸⁵

The *Moses* in its final position in the tomb of Julius II is the culmination of both the icon of papal authority projected in the Sistine Chapel walls and the characterization of the individual pope's personality, played out in one form in the Vatican Logge. The seated posture of the *Moses* projects the same princely spirit that Bronzino will depict in the *Appointing of Joshua*, affirming his position as leader. The tablets of the Law clutched firmly under his right arm confirm his role as the lawgiver. Though his priestly role is not portrayed in the actual figure itself, the companion figures of the *Contemplative* and the *Active Life* suggest the spiritual aspect of his station. The rugged physicality sums up in one figure what took an entire wall of fresco in the Sistine Chapel: the power that is the foundation of these roles. However, located directly below the effigy of the pope, that power takes on a much more specific quality. The combination of gravity and intensity in the countenance of the *Moses* suggested to Condivi that the figure was "apt to inspire both love and terror" and to Vasari that the figure had "aria di vero santo e terribilissimo principe."⁸⁶ Indeed, the inherent fierceness of the character embodied the self-styled *terribilità* of Julius II. The della Rovere pope's zest for combat and conflict was enthusiastically compared in his own time with the belligerent qualities of Moses, his willingness to

with respect to the upper portion of the body. See Earl E. Rosenthal, "Michelangelo's *Moses*, *dal di sotto in su*," *Art Bulletin* 46 (1964): 544-46.

⁸⁵ For a summary of the principal interpretations of the *Moses*, see Baldini, *Complete Sculpture* 49-50.

make war for his people.⁸⁷ The titanic nature of Michelangelo's *Moses* expresses victory and, in its context, is emblematic of Julius II as confident leader, stoic commander and triumphant champion.

Conclusion

The use of the image of Moses—leader of the Hebrews—as an antetype to the pope—leader of Christendom—maintained a continuing tradition. This includes the various Exodus scenes in the Casino of Pius IV, de' Medici (1559-65) by Federico Zuccaro (1540/42-1609) and Federico Barocci (c. 1535-1612) and the grand *Life of Moses* frescoes by Giovanni Lanfranco (1582-1647) and others in the Sala Regia of the Palazzo del Quirinale for Paul V (1605-21; fig. 130).⁸⁸ In these cases, as well, the image of Moses functioned both as an icon of the institution of the papacy and as a personal emblem of individual popes.

Outside of Rome, this iconographical convention was applied to other ecclesiastics who combined their sacred responsibilities with those of a secular lord. There is, for example, the tapestry cycle of Guglielmo (1538-87) and Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga (1505-63), later given to Carlo Borromeo (1538-84) after he became cardinal in 1559 (workshop of Nicolas Karcher; Milan, Museo del Duomo; 1553-62).⁸⁹ In the more strictly civic sector, Raphael's Logge frescoes formed part of the

⁸⁶ Condivi, *Life of Michelangelo* 79. Vasari, *Vite* 7: 166.

⁸⁷ Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons* 15. Julius's vigilance in prayer for military victory was compared with Moses prayers at the Battle with Amalek. See Stinger, *Renaissance* 218-21.

⁸⁸ Graham Smith, *The Casino of Pius IV* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 79-81, 83-84, 90-94 and 100-06. The Sala Regia (now the Sala dei Corazzieri) was the space for foreign diplomats to receive official audiences with the pope. See Giovanni-Pietro Bernini, *Giovanni Lanfranco*, 2nd ed. (Calestano: Centro studi della Val Baganza, 1985) 48-52.

⁸⁹ The tapestries were probably ordered by Cardinal Ercole on behalf of his young nephew, Guglielmo. It has been suggested that the set could refer to both the duke and his ecclesiastical uncle. The cycle was originally composed of six scenes from Exodus and Numbers and a seventh of *puttini* with the

stylistic inspiration for Ferrante Gonzaga's (1507-57) *Life of Moses* tapestries (Brussels workshop, probably of Willem and Jan der Moyen, 1545-50 and Brussels workshop, probably of Peter van Oppenheim, 1545-50; Châteaudun Castle, Caisse des Monuments Historiques).⁹⁰ The two Gonzaga tapestry cycles require further historical analysis before firm interpretive conclusions can be drawn from them. Nevertheless, the stylistic and iconographic roots point to Rome, where, like the Medici or Savonarola in Florence, the Roman pontiffs teased out the virtues of Moses that were appropriate to their reigns as both spiritual leaders and earthly princes.

Images and Ideas of Moses in Venice

Venice was knowledgeable of the political fashioning of Moses in central Italy. In fact, judging from sixteenth-century print history, Savonarola's sermons and Machiavelli's *The Prince* and *The Discourses* were published repeatedly in Venice.⁹¹ However, *la Serenissima* went her own way in styling the Old Testament prophet for political purposes. While the Florentines generated potent rhetoric of Moses as ruler and the popes commissioned monumental painted programs and imposing sculpture

Gonzaga arms. The Mosaic scenes are: *Passage through the Red Sea*, *Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law*, *Brazen Serpent*, *Moses and the False Magi before Pharaoh* (destroyed by fire 1906), *Passover* (destroyed by fire 1906), and the *Fall of Manna* (destroyed by fire 1906). The set is documented in Milan by 1566. Clifford M. Brown and Guy Delmarcel, *Tapestries for the Courts of Federico II, Ercole and Ferrante Gonzaga, 1522-63* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1996) 206-07.

⁹⁰ Later editions of Ferrante's *Moses* tapestries are in Madrid and Vienna. The ten scenes from the Willem and Jan der Moyen workshop are: *Burning Bush*, *Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh*, *Israelites Hand over Silver Treasures to Moses*, *Passage through the Red Sea*, *Israelites Praise the Lord*, *Gathering of Manna*, *Water from the Rock*, *Adoration of the Golden Calf*, *Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law*, and *Brazen Serpent*. The two scenes by the Peter van Oppenheim workshop are: *Israelites Kill Five Madianite Kings* and *Abduction of Madianite Women and Children*. It has been suggested that Ferrante's cycle was commissioned or purchased by him during his years as governor of Milan (1546-54) and, in this context, the figure of Moses could be viewed as symbolic of him. Brown and Delmarcel, *Tapestries* 194 and 204.

⁹¹ The sermons of Savonarola were published in Venice in whole or in part in at least 1513, 1517, 1520, 1528, 1539, 1540, 1541, 1544 and 1545. *The Prince* was published in Venice in at least 1537, 1539,

of Moses to communicate the authority of Rome and the characters of individual pontiffs, the Venetians were unusual for their lack of attention to Moses. Despite the historical veneration of Moses as a saint and the entrenched connection with the East, in the Renaissance political sphere Venice produced no great pictorial cycles or literary analyses of the prophet. Instead, the vague image of Moses that emerges in the Venetian civic discourse is in line with the myth of the city: self-effacing and group oriented.

The Ducal Palace: Exterior

The visual images of Moses that related to the popes in Rome or to the Medici in Florence were constructed on a monumental scale and usually as part of complex narrative programs of the prophet. By contrast, in Venice there exists one comparatively smaller scale image of Moses with a direct connection to the government: the carved relief capital of *Moses Receiving the Law* at the northwest corner of the Ducal Palace (fig. 97).

The capital relief is part of the fifteenth-century addition to the Ducal Palace, which extends from the tondo of Justice on the west side to the northwest corner beside the Porta della Carta. Located at this juncture is Bartolomeo Bon's sculpted group of the Judgement of Solomon (c. 1435). Below on the foliated capital are relief scenes of Justitia, Aristotle, the *Moses Receiving the Law*, Solon, Scipio, Numa Pompilius and Trajan.⁹²

1540, 1546 and 1550. *The Discourses* were published in Venice in at least 1532, 1540, 1543, 1546, 1550 and 1554. British Museum, *Short-Title Catalogue* and British Library, *Supplement*.

⁹² Staale Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic*, Acta ad archaeologium et artium historiam pertinentia 5 (Rome: L'erma, 1974) 170.

The Moses narrative is similar in pictorial construction to the painted scenes in the Sistine Chapel and Raphael's Logge. Moses is an older, bearded man dressed in a long toga and regal cloak. Though he kneels in deference, he looks directly into the eyes of God who descends from the heavens above. Meeting the gaze of Moses, the Lord places the tablets of the Law in the prophet's hands. The two protagonists are similar in physical aspect although the holy nature of God is denoted by a halo. Opposite the figure of God is a cluster of leaves, which both balances the composition and refers iconographically to the burning bush, the site of Moses' previous encounter with Yahweh. Like the Roman paintings, the Venetian capital relief conveys the sense of Moses as the singular commander of the Law: he is the man whom God entrusts to dispense justice to his people.

As part of the wider capital program of great ancient statesmen, the Ducal Palace image of Moses looks forward to Machiavelli's rhetoric, which would group the prophet with both real and mythological leaders of antiquity. However, while Machiavelli would stress the *virtù* of the ruler, the capital relief is embedded in a pictorial discourse of justice. The personification of Justice is the linking element of the capital, the virtue that binds the great ancient rulers. The Judgement of Solomon group above the capital provides the exemplar of wise and just government.⁹³ A second personification of Justice seated on her throne in the central tondo of the Piazzetta façade is the linchpin for the iconography of the west end of the Palace

⁹³ For discussions of the relationship between the Solomon iconography and the Ducal Palace, see Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* 151 and 170 and Ennio Concina, *A History of Venetian Architecture*, trans. Judith Landry (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 93. See also David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 2001) 98.

exterior (fig. 99). In this context, the image of Moses is celebrated for the virtue that he embodies rather than the man that he was.⁹⁴

Located at the junction of the Ducal Palace and San Marco, justice and the law as instructed in the Old Testament stand side-by-side with Christian religion.⁹⁵ This idea is echoed in another relief of *Moses Receiving the Law* on the west façade of San Marco (fig. 98).⁹⁶ Located on the external molded face of the central arch of the Window of the Horses, the San Marco relief is also fifteenth-century and similar in composition to the Ducal Palace capital relief. Again Moses kneels before God who places the tablets directly in the prophet's hands. Though the upper body of the figure of God is destroyed, its position suggests that the exchange is a face to face encounter. The small trees and the slab upon which the prophet kneels help to locate the narrative at the summit of Mount Sinai. Like the atrium cupola mosaics, the San Marco relief is part of a wider program of stories of Genesis and the prophets that play out a history of salvation. However, the depiction of the lawgiving, rather than one of the stories of the early biography of Moses, suggests a link with the Ducal Palace. The repetition of this scene on both the state church and the seat of government emphasizes the correspondence and interchangeability of justice in both locations and reinforces the notion that this virtue is delivered directly to each place by God himself.

⁹⁴ For the Solomon column as symbolic of the idea of positive law, rather than of a specific legislator, see Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* 171.

⁹⁵ "Conciosia che essendosi fondato il Palazzo publico per habitatione del Principe, & per render ragione al popolo, parue à gli antichi, che la Chiesa fosse congiunta al Palazzo, essendo cosa conueneuole, che la giustitia s'abbracci, secondo quel detto del Salmo con la pace & con la religione." Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 92-93. The placement of the Solomon group at this juncture was appropriate given that Solomon was the builder of both the Temple and Palace in Jerusalem. See Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* 170.

⁹⁶ Bruno Bertoli, ed., *La Basilica di San Marco: Arte e simbologia* (Venice: Edizioni Studium cattolico veneziano, 1993). Touring Club Italiano, *Venezia*, 3rd ed., Guida d'Italia (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1985) 222.

In the context of the Ducal Palace and San Marco, the Moses reliefs reflect Thomist political philosophy: implied in the tablets that God places in the prophet's hands is the prescription for the most perfect formula of government, the combination of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.⁹⁷ This formula mirrors that conducted inside the Palace, the Venetian combination of Doge, Senate and Great Council. In this way, the Moses reliefs act as signs of an entire institution rather than a singular person, the government as a whole rather than one man within it. In the broader program of the west facade the Ducal Palace Moses relief in particular informs the viewer that the Palace is the home of the virtue of Moses and his Law rather than the residence of a second Moses.

The Doge

Despite the generalizing vision of Moses on the exterior of the Ducal Palace, like the Medici rulers and the popes in Rome, the doges of Venice were also compared to Moses in orations. Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623), writing about the institution of the doge, noted that in Deuteronomy God commanded that the prince be the dispenser of divine law on earth.⁹⁸ A specific comparison between Moses and Doge Francesco Donà

⁹⁷ Scripture is unclear as to what specifically the tablets contained: "When he had finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God." (Exod. 31: 18) "Testimony" could embrace any of a number of concepts that are discussed in the preceding chapters, including Yahweh's instructions on the building of the sanctuary and on its ministers (Exod. 25-31) and the handing over of the Decalogue (Exod. 20). It is equally unclear what the precise meaning of the tablets was in medieval and Renaissance Christian art. This tradition tended to treat the tablets as generalized icons of the legislative part of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch or the entire Old Testament. For a discussion of the various Christian interpretations of the tablets of the Law, with especial emphasis on visual representations, see Ruth Mellinkoff, "The Round-Topped Tablets of the Law: Sacred Symbol and Emblem of Evil," *Journal of Jewish Art* 1 (1974): 28-43.

⁹⁸ "Nel Deuteronomio comanda Dio che il Re habbia un libro della legge divina dove lega tutti li giorni della sua vita per mettere in esecuzione li statuti di essa legge..." Paolo Sarpi qtd. in Bartolomeo Cecchetti, *La repubblica di Venezia e la corte di Roma nei rapporti della religione*, vol. 1 (Venice, 1874) 90. See also Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* 141.

(1545-53) was made by Francesco Grisonio, ambassador of Capodistria at Donà's inauguration. After reciting the virtues of the good prince—*Giustitia, Prudenza, Temperanza, Sapientia, Studio di publica utilia, Clementia, Charita*—which, of course, all the people recognize as inherent in Donà, Grisonio goes on to make the parallel: “Nelle creatione in persona di Mosè dice al suo popolo il Signore: Proponete quelli tra uoi, che sono saui, & della conuersation de quali ne gli ordini uostri ne hauete fatto proua: che di questi ui farò io capi, e Principi perfetti.”⁹⁹ Grisonio goes on to explain that Donà is chosen as doge by the republic—“questa Rep. Popolo di Dio eletto”—under the illumination of the Lord.¹⁰⁰

Although Grisonio praises Donà as the personification of the cardinal and theological virtues, he does not laud the doge for Machiavellian *virtù*. On the contrary, mimicking Aquinas's philosophy of the perfect prince, Grisonio emphasizes that Donà came to be elected through the will of God. In fact, the link made between Donà and Moses is ultimately an abstract one: the doge is like Moses in certain respects but he is not the reincarnation of Moses the man. There is no conflation between the two men. In line with the iconography on the exterior of the Ducal Palace, the oration supports the Venetian notion of Moses as an emblem of virtue rather than an icon of a single man.

In fact, nowhere in the decorative programs of the Ducal Palace is the doge or the institution of the doge conflated with Moses or the authority of Moses. It is difficult to account for absence, to explain why the Venetians steered away from the close associations between civic leader and Moses that were so common in central

⁹⁹ Francesco Sansovino, *Delle orationi recitate a principi di Venetia nella loro creatione da gli ambasciadori di diverse città* (Venice, 1562) 11r.

¹⁰⁰ Sansovino, *Delle orationi* 11r-11v.

Italy. It could be that picturing the doge in a visual relationship with Moses would invite too strong of a connection to be made between the Venetian government and Judaism.¹⁰¹ This could well have been considered distasteful in the city that, particularly in the sixteenth century, struggled with its social and economic relationship with the resident Jews.¹⁰² However, a reason entrenched more in the myth of Venice might suggest that a visual comparison between doge and Moses would verge toward a slippage between the two, conferring an authority on the Venetian monarch that ran contrary to the Venetian ideal of an egalitarian society.

The survival of an ancient nomadic clan like the Hebrews depended on unconditional loyalty to the group and the suppression of individuality, the individualist being a danger to both himself and the group.¹⁰³ In the same way the success of Venice depended on—superficially, if not also in reality—the submission of personal *virtù* to the good of the group.¹⁰⁴ The doge was no exception and the ducal images in the Palace, particularly the votive paintings, underline this principle.¹⁰⁵ Though each votive picture depicts an individual doge, their accumulation effectively commemorates the long line of an institution rather than memorializing personalities.

¹⁰¹ It has been suggested that the potential connection with Judaism was the reason for the avoidance of any substantial reference to the Old Testament in the Ducal Palace decorative schemes. In the Palace there are Andrea Previtali's *Drowning of Pharaoh*, which will be discussed later in this chapter with reference to Titian's woodcut of the same subject and one nonspecific reference to the old covenant, Veronese's ceiling painting of *Religion and Faith* in the Collegio. The scene is a generic Old Testament sacrifice, unrelated to any particular story from the Hebrew Bible. Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* 256-59.

¹⁰² For more on Venice's relationship with the Jews, see Chapter 4.

¹⁰³ It has been suggested that this accounts for the downplaying of the personality of Moses beyond Exodus 4. Silver, *Images* 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ "Our auncestors, form whome wee haue receyued so flourishing a commonwealth, all in one did vnite themselues in a consenting desire to establish, honour, and amplifie their country, without hauing in a manner any the least regarde of their owne priuate glorie or commodity." Gasparo Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Gouernment of Venice*, 1551, trans. Lewes Lewkenor (London, 1599) 5-6. Originally published as *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* (Venice, 1551), Contarini's treatise is the most comprehensive guide to the myth of Venice. For a concise outline of the myth and its history, see Muir, *Civic Ritual* 13-61.

Additionally, these paintings express more of a conventional Christian piety in the service of the city rather than the commission of power over the city. For example, the votive picture of Doge Nicolò da Ponte (1578-85; fig. 215) portrays the doge kneeling before the Virgin and Child accompanied by a host of angels, saints and putti. Da Ponte stares into space with a blank expression on his face as he raises his arms in an orans position, confirming the mystical nature of the scene. Compositions such as this one emphasize the doge's obedience to the Lord, a virtue of the good ruler prescribed by Aquinas. The doge submits to the Law rather than wields it.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the image of da Ponte in his ceremonial robes with the cityscape of Venice in the background demonstrates that in his role as doge the man surrenders his individualism and becomes the symbolic embodiment of the state.¹⁰⁷

Given that the figure of the doge was the symbol of the state, it is not surprising that the Venetians avoided the kind of Moses imagery that was prevalent in central Italy. Picturing a prophet whose image was so bound up with ideas of authority and supremacy would have been inappropriate in a city whose identity was based on an egalitarian, group-oriented ethos. In only one instance in the sixteenth

¹⁰⁵ For more on the votive paintings, see Wolfgang Wolters, *Storia e politica nei dipinti di Palazzo Ducale* (Venice: Arsenale, 1987) 93-135.

¹⁰⁶ If the doge bears a resemblance to Moses here, it is closest to the Jewish reading of the prophet as *ish-elohim*, God's man, and *eved adonai*, God's faithful servant. For more on these aspects of Moses, see Silver, *Images* 42.

¹⁰⁷ Beyond the walls of the Ducal Palace, ducal tombs and monuments in the city's churches, especially the Frari and SS. Giovanni e Paolo, could portray the individualized authority of the doges. However, even in these circumstances, ducal effigies were carefully choreographed with the personifications of civic virtues so as to highlight the conflation of the doge and the state rather than instigate a cult of personality. Figs. 116, 117 and 175. See Debra Pincus, *The Arco Foscari: The Building of a Triumphal Gateway in Fifteenth Century Venice*, diss. New York University, 1974 (New York: Garland, 1976) 423-27; Pincus, "The Tomb of Doge Nicolò Tron and Venetian Renaissance Ruler Imagery," *Art the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H.W. Janson*, eds. Moshe Barasch and Lucy Freeman Sandler (New York: Abrams, 1981) 127-50; Pincus, *The Tombs of the Doges of Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2000) 1-2; and Pincus, "The Venetian Ducal Tomb: Issues of Methodology—and a Note on Titian's *Assunta*," *Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Italian Sculpture*, eds. Steven Bule, Alan Phipps Darr and

century did the Venetians break from this custom. However, this was the exception that proved the rule.

Doge Pasquale Cicogna

At the death of Nicolò da Ponte, Pasquale Cicogna (1585-95) was created doge. His reign was a peaceful one, noted mainly for his support of public building campaigns including the Rialto Bridge.¹⁰⁸ During his dogate Cicogna was a great patron of the Crociferi (the crutched friars) and it was under his sponsorship that the decorative work of their church, Santa Maria dei Crociferi, now Santa Maria Assunta or the Gesuiti, and the adjoining *ospedaletto*, the oratory, flourished. Three wall paintings (1586-87) in the oratory by Palma il Giovane are devoted to the life of Cicogna from his time as Procurator of San Marco to his dogeship (figs. 156-58).¹⁰⁹ In the church's sacristy (fig. 8) is Palma's complex program of ceiling and wall paintings. The ceiling cycle of five paintings was completed first (1589-90).¹¹⁰ The *Fall of Manna* (fig. 150) is located at the center, accompanied by two Old Testament scenes (*Elijah Fed by the Angel*, *David Receives the Bread from Abimelec*; figs. 151-52) and chiaroscuro of the four Evangelists and four doctors of the Church (fig. 153). The wall program includes

Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Florence: Casa Editrice le Lettere, 1992) 349-53. See also Brown, *Venice and Antiquity* 113.

¹⁰⁸ Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 623.

¹⁰⁹ The paintings are: *Pasquale Cicogna Assists with the Celebration of Mass with Padre Priamo Balbi*; *Pasquale Cicogna Receives from a Messenger Boy the Announcement of His Election as Doge*; and *Pasquale Cicogna in the Ducal Habit Visits the Oratory of the Crociferi*. Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte ovvero le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello stato*, ed. Detlev Freiherr von Hadeln, vol. 2 (Berlin: G. Grote, 1914) 180. Stefania Mason Rinaldi, *Palma il Giovane: L'opera completa* (Milan: Electa, 1984) 138-39. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 170. Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* 110. Cicogna's votive painting at the Ducal Palace also pays tribute to his connection with the Crociferi, their oratory placed in the background (fig. 159).

¹¹⁰ Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 2: 182. Rinaldi, *Palma* 126-27. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 169-70. Juergen Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings of the Renaissance* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1968) 68-69.

the *Brazen Serpent* of 1592-93 (fig. 154-55) and representations of saints and stories that are related to the *Crociferi* of a later date.¹¹¹

The central ceiling canvas depicts the moment of the showering of manna from heaven. The Israelites rise in a joyous frenzy to catch the miraculous food. Men, women and children participate in the gathering. One young man wearing only a loincloth raises a large platter above his head to catch the rain of manna.¹¹² In the background underneath a canopy beside a tree sits Moses accompanied by two attendants. He raises his staff up as if commanding the miracle that takes place. Though he is not at the center of the action, Moses' posture suggests his important position in the narrative.

The *Brazen Serpent* concentrates more closely on the narrative focal point and its protagonist. Moses sits at the center of the scene raising his right arm to direct the attention of the Hebrews to the serpent entwined on the cross-like pole. To his left and right, the people engage in a physical struggle to wrest themselves from the stinging snakes. The intertwined bodies and flaying limbs highlight the drama of the moment.

The ceiling cycle subjects of mystical feeding and sacred bread are generally understood as Eucharistic types. Coupled with this program, the *Brazen Serpent* alludes to the salvation brought about by Christ's sacrifice on the cross.¹¹³ In this way, the programmatic Christian meaning of the images of Moses is not wholly different

¹¹¹ In addition to the *Brazen Serpent*, the wall paintings are: *Sant'Elena* and *San Cleto* (1592-93); *San Lanfranco* and *San Ciriaco*; *Story of the True Cross and the Crociferi*; *Emperor Heraclius Transports the Cross to Jerusalem*; *San Cleto Founds the Order of the Crociferi* and *San Ciriaco Establishes Their Rules*; and *Pius II Reforms the Constitution of the Order and Alexander III Confirms the Rules in the Twelfth Century* (1620-25). Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 2: 180. Rinaldi, *Palma* 126-27. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 170. The Emperor Heraclius was hailed as a new Moses after defeating the Persians in 627.

¹¹² This figure and the general activity of the Hebrews recall the style of Tintoretto, particularly his rendition of the subject at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. For more on the San Rocco painting, see Chapter 5.

¹¹³ Rinaldi, *Palma* 126. Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 68-69.

from that at the Chapel of Eleonora. However, unlike the Florentine counterpart, the Venetian grouping is unusual in that it is not accompanied by the Water from the Rock, type for the blood of Christ. It will be suggested here that the specific choice of the central scene of the *Fall of Manna* and the *Brazen Serpent* may also function as allegories for the life of Doge Cicogna.

Although completed much later than Palma's paintings, Cicogna's ducal monument (Girolamo Campagna; completed before 1663; fig. 100), located to the left of the main altar, above the door to the sacristy, poses suggestive connections between the doge and the Mosaic iconography.¹¹⁴ Sculpted from marble, the reclining effigy of the doge lays atop his tomb. Below, the Cicogna arms are crowned by the ducal corno. Beside the monument are four inscriptions. Two of these are significant here: PATAVIO/ IN PAESTILENTIA and ET PATRIAE IN FAME/ PRAESTO FUIT. In his own time, Cicogna was lauded for his benevolence during times of plague and famine.¹¹⁵ It has already been shown with reference to the Chapel of Eleonora how the *Fall of Manna* was equated with the charity that will be lavished on the people by the good prince. Like the Florentine image that combines the *Water from the Rock* with the *Fall of Manna*, the Venetian painting portrays the miracle occurring at the command of Moses. In addition, Palma's painting appears to stress the princely nature of the prophet: not only is he seated but the canopy further

¹¹⁴ Andrea Da Mosto, *I dogi di Venezia con particolare reguardio alle loro tombe* (Venice: Ongania, 1939) 197-200. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 171.

¹¹⁵ Da Mosto, *I dogi* 199. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 171-72. The Venetian doges were, of course, meant to exhibit their charity to the people from the beginning of official tenure. As an eighteenth-century painting (fig. 101) shows, part of the ducal inauguration ceremonies involved the new doge being carried around the Piazza on a wooden *pozzetto*. From this height he would shower the crowd with ducats. The inauguration events were traditional from the fourteenth century to the end of the Republic. For more on the ducal inauguration ceremonies, see Åsa Boholm, *The Doge of Venice: The Symbolism of State Power in the Renaissance* (Gothenburg: Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology, 1990) 133-43.

suggests the idea of a throne. However, the *Brazen Serpent* moves away from the Florentine interpretation of retribution to cast the subject in a more Venetian light. In the sixteenth century, the plague was sometimes referred to as a serpent. In an oration made at his ducal inauguration, Cicogna is extolled for helping Padua deal with its plague, “il crudo serpe delle peste”.¹¹⁶ The association between the image of the Brazen Serpent and the plague in the later sixteenth century will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. However, at this point, it is enough to recognize the central position of Moses, the one who points the way to salvation, in the sacristy painting. The position of the protagonist distinguishes the image from the Chapel of Eleonora fresco, which omits Moses from the scene and focuses more on the punishment of the people. Moses at the Crociferi offers succor to those afflicted. Like Raphael’s meek and charitable prophet at the Vatican Logge that refers to the personality of Leo X, Palma’s Moses appears to commemorate the same characteristics of Pasquale Cicogna.

In literature as well as the visual arts Cicogna was paralleled with Moses. At his inauguration, Cicogna received the usual abundance of orations in his honor. In one address, it is proclaimed that the doge will be revered by his people like the great ancient leaders, including Moses: “come...gli Hebrei tanto riverirano Mosè divino legislator loro, i Persi Zoroastre & i Romani Quirino & i Cesari tra i loro Dei connumeravano.”¹¹⁷ Though this type of allegory was commonplace in both Venice and central Italy, the Mosaic discourse associated with Cicogna often extended well

¹¹⁶ Giosepe Policretti, *Oratione di Giosepe Policretti da Treviso nella creatione del Serenissimo Prencipe di Venetia Pasqual Cicogna* (Padua, 1586) n. pag.

¹¹⁷ Dal Covolo, Bartolomeo, “Oratione dell’Sig. Bartolomeo dal Covolo, Ambasciator di Feltre. al Reverendiss. Vescovo di Feltre,” in Agostino Michele, *Scielta delle orationi fatte nella creatione del seren.mo prencipe di Vinegia Pasqual Cicogna* (Venice, 1587) n. pag.

beyond the standard political tropes to encompass a more religious understanding of the prophet and the doge. For instance, another inaugural speech hints at the miraculous qualities inherent in both men:

Si che Venetia con gran ragione gloriar si putoe d'hauer vn Principe, & (quelche è maggior miracolo) à giorni nostri, per cui ne Aristide, ne Phocione ad Athene; ne Epamino' da à Thebe, ne Serrano, ne Cincinnato, ne Catone à Roma ad iuidiar habbia in cui oltra la Santita, & integrità della vita, quella virtù si scorge tanto in Mosè locata, la mansuetudine io dico.¹¹⁸

The characterization of Moses in this context surpasses the obedient servant of God alluded to in the speech to Donà as the virtue of the prince is in this instance linked with holiness.

Indeed, descriptions of Cicogna were not limited to simple piety. In another instance, Cicogna's glorious ascension to the ducal throne is compared to Moses returning from Mount Sinai: "e chi non era della vostra creatione avisato, potea conoscervi al lume, che vi lampeggiava nel volto. come a Mosè tornato dal monte, dal ragionamento familiare con Dio."¹¹⁹ The quotation suggests the special nature of Cicogna the man yet it does not touch upon the *virtù* to which Machiavelli might have alluded. Instead, the reference to Exodus 34: 29-30 suggests a deeply mystical understanding of Cicogna and his relationship with his people. It suggests that, like Moses, Cicogna is a man close to God.

Cicogna's supposed resemblance to Moses was, in fact, in the Byzantine tradition displayed in the San Marco atrium. Like the Old Testament prophet, the

¹¹⁸ Muzio Sforza, *Oratione del Sig. Mutio Sforza fatta al Ser.mo Paschal Cicogna nella sua assontione al Principato di Venetia* (Venice, 1585) n. pag.

doge was regarded as a holy man. This was partly the result of miracles being attributed to him during his own lifetime. The most famous of these took place in Candia, where he was a distinguished Venetian administrator for ten years: while hearing mass, the consecrated host flew from the hands of the priest and landed in Cicogna's hands.¹²⁰ Miracles such as this coupled with the touted innocence of his life, the integrity of his morals and his overall peacefulness led many Venetians to hail him at his death as a saint.¹²¹ In this respect, Cicogna the man was unique in the history of Venetian doges.

The analogies between Cicogna and the Old Testament prophet were never derived from ideas of political power or supremacy. Orators paralleled him with Moses in the same spirit as any other doge: placing him in a narrative of virtue rather than singling him out for his *virtù*. The panegyrics do not suggest that Cicogna wielded an authority greater than any man who wore the corno before him but instead allude to his personal piety. If the paintings of the *Fall of Manna* and the *Brazen Serpent* at the Crociferi sacristy are meant to be emblematic of Cicogna, then they must be understood as representations of the saintly man rather than the political icon. The image of Moses in the strictly political context remained true to the Venetian myth of egalitarianism and the sanctity of the group.

Titian's Drowning of Pharaoh

¹¹⁹ Luigi Groto, "Oratione del Signor Luigi Groto, Ambasciator di Hadria, all'Illustriss. Cardinal Canano dedicata," in Michele, *Scielta delle orationi* n. pag.

¹²⁰ Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 171. Da Mosto, *I dogi* 199. The ceiling painting in the Pregadi of the Ducal Palace attributed to Tommaso Dolobella (c. 1585; fig. 123) is believed by some to commemorate the miracle. Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* 249-50. The event is also alluded to in the first inscription on his monument at the Crociferi: VELUT ALTER SYME – IN – MANIBUS CHRISTUM – EXCEPIT.

¹²¹ Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 623, 626.

Titian's *Drowning of Pharaoh* (fig. 219) is a monumental woodcut composed of twelve separate blocks, measuring a total of 120.5 x 222 cm.¹²² It is one of the rare Old Testament scenes produced by the artist.¹²³ Though the woodcut lacks verifiable provenance, the design date of c. 1514-15 has been established by the discovery of copyright privileges given to the publisher Bernardino Benalio by the Venetian Senate in 1515.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the first known printing was by Domenico dalle Greche in 1549, a date confirmed by a cartouche inserted along the lower border of the print.¹²⁵ The thirty-four years between initial design and printing are unaccountable. Unfortunately, due to a lack of evidence we do not know the number of editions and we cannot even be certain of its intended audience.¹²⁶ Without a known patron and without a pendant or program within which to analyze the print, it is necessary to address the work's pictorial qualities as the first point of departure.

The escape of the Hebrews from the persecution of the Egyptians is presented as a whirlwind of drama and visual excitement. Pharaoh and his army drown under a crushing wall of water at the left while the Hebrews take to safety on the shoreline at the lower right corner. The tight consolidation of the raggedy group at the edge of the swelling waves emphasizes how close they were to destruction. They look with joy and relief out to the sea where the chaotic annihilation of their enemies takes place. At

¹²² For the most recent discussion of the *Drowning of Pharaoh*, including references to earlier analyses, see Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown, *Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer and Titian* (Milan: Bompiani, 1999) 460-61.

¹²³ Titian's other great Old Testament works are the cycle of three pictures—*Cain and Abel*, the *Sacrifice of Abraham* and *David and Goliath* (fig. 220)—produced for the ceiling of Santo Spirito in Isola (1542-44), now in the sacristy of Santa Maria della Salute. See Madlyn Kahr, "Titian's Old Testament Cycle," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 193-205 and *Titian: Prince of Painters* (Venice: Marsilio, 1990) 255-58.

¹²⁴ Aikema and Brown, *Renaissance Venice* 460.

¹²⁵ LA CRUDEL PERSECUTIONE DEL OSTINATO RE, CONTRO IL POPULO TANTO DA DIO/ AMATO, CON LA SOMMERSIONE DI ESSO PHARAONEGOLOSO DIL INOCENTE/ SANGUE. DISEGNATA PER MANO DEL GRANDE, ET IMMORTAL TITIAN./ IN VENETIA P[ER]DOMENICO DALLE GRECHE DEPENTORE VENITIANO./ M.DXLIX.

last a woman may sit down to nurse her child. Moses stands before the group at water's edge, a muscular figure with billowing beard. He holds his staff high to command the raging sea. The dark clouds gathering above the blackened silhouette of the city at the background and the steep and craggy rockface opposite accentuate further the dreadfulness of the moment.

The atmospheric and landscape details that heighten the drama of the scene recall not simply the literal account in Exodus 14: 26-28 but also the wider Judeo-Christian tradition that endured in Venice.¹²⁷ The dark, brewing storm and the ragged cliff reflect ancient exposition on the Red Sea story, in particular Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*.¹²⁸ Josephus exaggerates the threat of the Egyptians, stressing the precarious position into which they led the Hebrews:

Now when the Egyptians had overtaken the Hebrews, they prepared to fight them, and by their multitude drove them into a narrow place.... They also seized on the passages by which they imagined the Hebrews might fly, shutting them up between inaccessible precipices and the sea; for there was on each side a ridge of mountains that terminated at the sea, which were impassable by reason of their roughness, and obstructed their flight; wherefore they pressed upon the Hebrews with their army, where the ridges of the mountains closed with the sea; which army they placed at the tops of the mountains, that so they might deprive them of any passage to the plain.

(*Antiquities* 2: 15.3)¹²⁹

Josephus goes on further to describe the terrifying weather:

¹²⁶ For more on the dearth of evidence, see *Titian* 166-67.

¹²⁷ Cf. *Titian* 166: "The rendering of the Biblical narrative is nothing if not literal."

¹²⁸ For the print history of the *Antiquities* in Renaissance Venice, see Chapter 1, n. 18.

As soon, therefore, as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind, and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky and dreadful thunders and lightening, with flashes of fire.

Thunderbolts also were darted upon them. (*Antiquities* 2: 16.3)¹³⁰

Titian is not alone in referring to ancient Jewish exegesis. Rosselli's fresco of the *Drowning of Pharaoh* (fig. 91) in the Sistine Chapel also depicts this storm in all its violence. In fact, just as much as Titian's woodcut works within a literary tradition of the Red Sea story so too does it work within a pictorial tradition of Red Sea images.

Four other versions of this subject are known to have been produced in the city leading up to and in the period: Gentile Bellini's (1429-1507) painting for the Scuola Grande di San Marco (destroyed by fire in 1485); a painting noted in the collection of Michele Viannello (last recorded as bought by Isabella d'Este in 1506); Andrea Previtali's (1480-1528; Venice, Accademia; fig. 165) painting for the *chiesetta* of the Ducal Palace (c. 1502-28); and Jan van Scorel's (1495-1562) panel, which was originally in the collection of Francesco Zio (c. 1520; Milan, private collection).¹³¹

¹²⁹ Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987) 75.

¹³⁰ Josephus, *Works* 76. This account of the weather relates directly to Ps 77: 16-18: "When the waters saw you, God, when the waters saw you they writhed in anguish, the very depths shook with fear. The clouds pelted down water, the sky thundered, your arrows shot back and forth. The rolling of your thunder was heard, your lightening-flashes lit up the world, the earth shuddered and shook."

¹³¹ Gentile Bellini: An extant commission of 15 December 1466 confirms that a *Drowning of Pharaoh* was commissioned for the Scuola di San Marco: "uno historia chome faraon esci fuera dela zità chon el so ezerzito e chome el se somerse et in laltro chome el so populo se somerse e chome laltro populo de moise fuzi nel deserto." ASV, San Marco, Reg. 16bis, Part 2, f. 36, qtd. in Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1988) 269. These Exodus narratives were accompanied by scenes from the life of Abraham by Andrea da Murano and Bartolomeo Vivarini; scenes from the life of David by Lazaro Sebastian; two canvases of the life of Noah and the *Creation of the World* by Bartolomeo Montagna; and Jacopo Bellini's canvases of the Passion of Christ and the story of Jerusalem. Andrea Previtali: The painting was paired with a *Christ in Limbo* also by Previtali. Sandra Moschini Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia: Opere d'arte del secolo XVI* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1962) 179-80. Jan van Scorel: Aikema and Borwn, *Renaissance Venice* 462-3. Gabriele Vendramin's 1569 inventory includes among its numerous

Previtali's version is compared most often with the woodcut because of his stylistic affiliation with Titian in the early years of the sixteenth century.¹³² However, there is little in common here: Previtali's orderly arrangement of Hebrews at the right and the small, shallow sea basin in which Pharaoh's army drowns bears no more than a passing resemblance to Titian's dynamic portrayal of figures in an equally dynamic landscape. Nevertheless, the organization of space to draw attention to the key themes of the narrative is comparable in these images as well as others.

The pictorial tradition within which Titian was working is particularly evident in his metaphorical use of the sea and shoreline. The compositional layout is a sophisticated update of the printed illustrations found in the Malermi Bible (fig. 36) and functions in the same way as that in the Previtali image.¹³³ Additionally, it is similar in composition, though in reverse, to Rosselli's fresco.¹³⁴ In each of these examples the shoreline acts as a dramatic physical divide between the Hebrews and the drowning Egyptian army. But while earlier works use the shoreline as a boundary line set between the two groups, Titian's woodcut also emphasizes the vastness of the sea that separates the two. The rolling waves suggest not only physical separation but spiritual difference as well. This severe categorization of the Chosen and their enemies is reminiscent of Savonarola's warning to isolate the sinner from the good of

belle cose a painting of the *Drowning of Pharaoh*: "Nel camerin...Un quadro de una sumercion de Faraon con un adornamento Negro dorado col suo timpano soazado et dorado." The inventory is reprinted in its entirety in Aldo Ravà, "Il 'Camerino delle Antigaglie' di Gabriele Vendramin," *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* 39 (1920): 179. Brown suggests this may have been van Scorel's panel. Aikema and Brown, *Renaissance Venice* 462. Additionally, Rosand and Muraro cite a reference to a *Drowning of Pharaoh* commissioned in Brescia at the time. David Rosand and Michelangelo Muraro, *Titian and the Venetian Woodcut* (Washington: The Foundation, 1976) 73.

¹³² Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia* 179-80. Brown's suggestion that van Scorel's panel bears compositional relationships with Titian's woodcut is dubious, given the panel's miniaturist attention to detail, sprawling green landscape and abundance of figures engaged in all variety of activity in the Hebrew camp. Aikema and Brown, *Renaissance Venice* 462-63.

¹³³ The influence of the Malermi Bible and other illustrated Bibles printed in the sixteenth century on the Venetian painters will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

the group. In the woodcut the closing sea draws attention not only to the isolation of the evil Egyptians but also to the integrity of the Chosen People.

For Savonarola, however, the Egyptian tyrant was Florentine, an enemy from within. For Venice the enemy was foreign. During the early years of the sixteenth century, Venice was engaged in a vicious war with the League of Cambrai, the combined forces of Pope Julius II, King Louis of France and the Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg. By the end of the first decade the Venetians had retreated from the *terra firma* and the enemy was camped on the mainland shores of the lagoon. But it was these waters that proved to be the godsend for Venice: the enemy could not breach the lagoon and thus the Venetians were saved. In 1513 the Peace of Blois was signed, bringing the worst of the confrontation to a close. Simultaneously Bernardino Benalio was preparing to petition for a copyright to Titian's woodcut. This coincidence of events has led scholars to surmise that the *Drowning of Pharaoh* is an allusion to the Venetians' seemingly miraculous survival during the war with the League.¹³⁵

Titian, however, was not the first to use of the Red Sea story as an allegory for success in battle. Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge was also compared to Moses' triumph against the Egyptians, Constantine being called a new Moses leading his people to the Promised Land.¹³⁶ As we have already seen, Duke Cosimo also exploited the story as a symbol of his own triumph at Montemurlo. The key difference

¹³⁴ For the pictorial sources of the Rosselli fresco, see Ettlinger, *Sistine Chapel* 44 and 47-48.

¹³⁵ Rosand and Muraro, *Titian* 73. See also Aikema and Brown, *Renaissance Venice* 460-61; Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 56; Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 305; Paul H.D. Kaplan, "The Storm of War: The Paduan Key to Giorgione's *Tempesta*," *Art History* 9 (1986): 413, n. 92; Rosand, *Myths* 80-81; and *Titian: Prince of Painters* 166. Cf. John Hale, "Michiel and the *Tempesta*: the Soldier in a Landscape as a Motif in Venetian Painting," in Denley and Elam, eds., *Florence and Italy* 407 and John Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale U P, 1990) 145.

¹³⁶ This is mentioned in the writing of Bishop Eusebius (264?-349?). See Lavin, *Place of Narrative* 179. See also Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino" 55 and Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel* 305.

between these examples and the Venetian woodcut, however, is the representation of the key protagonist: Moses.

At the lower right foreground of Titian's print stands Moses with one powerful arm raised. He points his staff out to the sea charging the closing of the tides on the cavalcade of Pharaoh's army. He commands God's ferocious will to put the guilty to death. The great waves rolling in from the horizon—from infinity—imply the magnitude of the power of Yahweh in a way that was not evident in the images of the Red Sea in other cities. In Bronzino's, Rosselli's and Raphael's frescoes it is the centrality of the figure of Moses that takes precedence in the narrative. In the Florentine work in particular there is no indication of divine intervention. By contrast, in the Titian woodcut the overwhelming sense of nature—the swelling sea, the boundless sky and the towering cliff—dwarfs mankind. God is the implied protagonist. While in the Florentine and Roman examples the drowning of Pharaoh is the victory of one man, in the Venetian example it is ultimately a victory for God.¹³⁷

Unlike the figure of Moses in the images of central Italy, the Old Testament prophet here plays more of an intercessory role. Even as he raises his staff to communicate God's will, he simultaneously looks back to the people. He stands out at the lead of the Hebrews at the very fore of the picture, yet at the same time he turns his back to the viewer, denying his individuality, rendering his identity irrelevant. Even as his figure stands out, the mode of the woodcut and the treatment of the composition as a whole preclude him from being the focal point of the image. The scene is rendered as a totality of undulating waves, gathering clouds and rippling

¹³⁷ In the same way, the impassive Moses in Previtali's *Drowning of Pharaoh* shifts focus from the image of the man. With his back turned and doing little more than pointing to the sky, the figure does not command the action in the way of the central Italian examples.

wind. The action of the woodcut line itself unifies the water, the weather, the landscape and the people.¹³⁸ Pharaoh's army, succumbing to the flood, is thrown together in a mass of chaos framed by the wall of waves. Pharaoh is almost indistinguishable from the other figures of his army in the confusion of the scene. Opposite, the poised contrapposto of Moses' body follows through the curve of the shore embracing the Hebrews gathered on the sand. The pictorial mode itself allows the identity of Moses the leader to merge with the identity of the people he guides.

Conclusion

In his discussions of Moses, Thomas Aquinas proposed the multifarious strands of political understanding that could be derived from the prophet: monarch, republican and seat of virtue. The emphasis on the first of these elements and the consequent orthodox interpretation of the third gave rise to the cult of the lawgiver in Florence and Rome. However, Moses could never be such an evocative figure in Venice because of her republican tradition and political myth. The Venetians did not stress the leadership or power—political, religious or otherwise—of an individual but rather emphasized a community of blessed people whose life journey was sometimes trying, even devastating, but always finds its end in grace. It is this distinctive Venetian approach to Moses that will be the focus of the forthcoming chapters.

¹³⁸ For further discussion of Titian's unique ability with the woodcut medium, see Konrad Oberhuber, "Titian Woodcuts and Drawings: Some Problems," *Tiziano e Venezia*, proc. of Convegno Internazionale di Studi, 1976, Venice (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1980) 523-28 and Paul Hills, *Venetian Color: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass 1250-1550* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 203. See also Caroline Karpinski, "Some Woodcuts after Early Designs of Titian," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 39 (1976): 272.

Chapter 3

The Early Development of Images of Moses in Sixteenth-Century Venice and the Veneto

Introduction

The chronological catalogue of images of Moses in Venice (see the Appendix) indicates that from the 1580s images of the narratives of Exodus began to flourish in the city. However, before addressing this period of proliferation, it is necessary first to review the Moses narratives that were already being produced in the Veneto region, paying particular attention to the choice of subject and the manner in which the images were produced. The use of typology is an especial point of concern as are the *scuole del sacramento*, the frequent patrons of these scenes. By setting the Venetian images in the broader artistic milieu of the region, it is possible to trace the roots of some of the more mature artistic devices that characterize works produced later in the century. Above all, by charting the full iconographic development of the Exodus stories from the mainland in the early decades to mid century, we may see more clearly the way in which the work of Tintoretto, the focus of the following three chapters, plays a pivotal role in this history.

Images of Moses in the Veneto

From early on in the sixteenth century the Moses narratives were gaining prominence in the Veneto region. These images fall into two categories: those of the second quarter of the century painted mainly in Brescia for chapels of the sacrament and those of the third quarter of the century painted by Jacopo Bassano and his workshop,

usually for private patrons in Venice and the Veneto. The first set of examples introduces the use of the Moses narratives as typological references on the monumental scale. The second set of paintings demonstrates the refinement of the integration of genre detail into the visual narratives. Like the Venetian images of Moses that developed concurrently, this second set of images implies a complex theological understanding of the Exodus narratives that extends beyond the rigid structure of typology. While subject and style will be the focus here, the issue of meaning will be analyzed more fully in the subsequent chapters.

Typology

Typology provides a means of understanding the Old and New Testaments as inextricably bound and in theological continuity with one another. Chapter 1 identified points in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospel of John and the Epistles of Paul, where this way of thinking—this mode of highlighting concordances—is established. The approach to this system in the visual arts was set up and made popular through the *Biblia Pauperum* (figs. 28-32) and the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹ These books presented a harmony of time where the stories of the Old Testament received their significance directly in terms of the stories of the New Testament.² For instance, in the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* the image of the Fall of Manna is paired with that of the Last Supper. In the *Biblia Pauperum* the Fall of Manna and the scene of Melchizedek

¹ In conjunction with the *Biblia Pauperum* and the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, the *Glossa Ordinaria* in conjunction with Nicholas of Lyra's formulation of exegesis provided full allegorical explanations of the Bible.

² See Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, 1913, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: Harper, 1972) 131-38.

offering bread and wine to Abraham are presented at either side of the Last Supper (fig. 30). Placed in such immediate visual relationship, the narratives reinforce each other and animate the abstract notions of John 6: 32 and 1 Cor. 10: 3.³

In the sixteenth century during the rise of the Protestant heresy, visual typologies on the monumental scale emphasized the theological tenets of the Catholic Church and expressed in a direct manner the Biblical authority of the Sacraments and other doctrines, especially the Real Presence. Chapter 2 touched on the ways in which this was carried out, such as in Bronzino's frescoes of the *Fall of Manna* and *Water from the Rock* in the Chapel of Eleonora where the images form direct allusions to the sacrifice of the Mass that took place in the Chapel. These types of images presented conventional Catholic beliefs (i.e. they did not present new theologies) but gained special prominence in the sixteenth century when those beliefs were challenged.⁴

Nowhere was this truer than in Venice and the Veneto. Maurice Cope, in his comprehensive study of the chapel of the sacrament in sixteenth-century Venice, notes that the incidence of heresy in the north of Italy was one stimulus for the profound devotion to the sacrament in the region.⁵ However, it was the strength of the local *scuole del sacramento*, parish-based confraternities which were widespread well before the rise of Protestantism, that particularly encouraged the development of this devotion.⁶ With this distinctive observance came the need and interest in chapel decoration that promoted the doctrine of the Real Presence. Monumental typological programs, many of which incorporated the stories of Moses and the Hebrews, fulfilled

³ The complexities of the early printed book and how sixteenth-century readers might have read these images will be addressed in Chapter 6.

⁴ Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 186-87.

⁵ Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 268-70.

⁶ Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 270-72.

these requirements. From the late fifteenth century, the confraternities of the sacrament and the foundation of chapels of the sacrament thrived on the *terra firma*.⁷ Therefore, it is the Veneto region that establishes the earliest developments of Venetian Mosaic iconography.

Early Images of Moses in the Veneto

The work of Nicola Giolfino (1476-1555) for the Chapel of the Sacrament in Santa Maria Organo, Verona brings together two subjects from the Exodus narratives: the *Fall of Manna* and the *Passover* (c. 1522; figs. 126 and 127).⁸ In the first scene Moses, Aaron and three other men, gather at the foreground to marvel at the miracle of the heavenly food. Moses, portrayed as an older man with a beard but without horns or rays of light, looks up to the sky with his arms spread wide in a modified orans posture. In the *Passover* there is a similar grouping of men this time gathered around the table of the Paschal meal. Moses stands at the near side of the table holding his staff, indicating his adherence to the Lord's command to eat in haste (Exod. 12: 11). Aaron is distinguishable by his full priestly regalia. Despite these individualistic details, both images appear to place greater stress on the group. They are an assembly of men coming together perhaps with different roles but united by a common purpose: to eat the Passover meal or to witness a miracle of God. In the landscape background of the *Fall of Manna* in particular, where the people of the Hebrew camp congregate to collect the heavenly food, there is a sense of community

⁷ Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 270-72.

⁸ These subjects are accompanied by frescoes of *Saints and Instruments of the Passion*. Marina Repetto, *Nicola Giolfino* (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 1990) 13. Marina Repetto, "Nicola Giolfino," *Maestri della pittura veronese*, ed. Pierpaolo Brugnoli (Verona: Banca Mutua Popolare di Verona, 1974) 153-60.

action. Additionally, Giolfino focuses particularly on genre details such as the intricacies of the components of Jewish religious costume and the delicate linearity of the surrounding architectural elements in the *Passover*. In sum, these frescoes exhibit the three key characteristics developed in the Veneto images of the Moses narratives: the prominence of the Passover and desert miracles; an emphasis on the Hebrews as a group or community; and an attention to genre detail.

These features of Veneto Moses iconography flourished especially in and around Brescia. Girolamo da Romano, called Romanino, (1484/7-1560) and Alessandro Bonvicino, alias Moretto, (c. 1498-1554) may be noted for their contributions to the development of this imagery. The earliest example of their work in this vein is their combined effort on the large program of paintings for the Chapel of the Sacrament at San Giovanni Evangelista, Brescia.⁹ Commissioned by the Scuola del Sacramento and the prior of the Augustinian canons at the church, the Chapel's decorative program was painted 1521-24 and includes numerous religious narratives from both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁰ Moretto's painting of the *Gathering of Manna* is of prime concern here (fig. 137). Two figures at either side of the foreground frame the scene. On the left a woman turns her back while balancing a jug on her head. Beside her a man holds out a shallow basket in hope of catching any last remnants of the rain of manna. Opposite at the right edge of the canvas, a man sits in

⁹ *Alessandro Bonvicino: Il Moretto* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1988) 186-92. Valerio Guazzoni, *Moretto: Il tema sacro* (Brescia: Grafo, 1981) 23-25. Gregori, Mina, Valerio Guazzoni, Bruno Passamani, Chiara Parisio, Franco Saba and Giovanni Testori, *Pittura del Cinquecento a Brescia* (Milan: Cassa di Risparmio delle provincie Lombarde, 1986) 178. Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 263. Giovanni Testori, *Romanino e Moretto alla Cappella del Sacramento* (Brescia: Grafo, 1975).

¹⁰ The left side of the chapel is painted entirely by Romanino. These images are: *Disputation of the Sacrament*; *Resurrection of Lazarus*; *Supper in the House of the Pharisee*; *Matthew*; *John the Evangelist*; and individual portraits of *Zechariah*, *Malachi*, *Moses*, *Habakkuk* and *Ezekiel*. The right side of the chapel is painted entirely by Moretto. These images are: *Last Supper*; *Dream of Elijah*; *Fall*

profile. His fanciful striped shirt and collar draw the viewer's attention as his gaze establishes a connection between the viewer and the painted space. Beside this figure a woman in a gown leans on a stone tablet inscribed EXOD/ .XVI. Throughout the rolling hills of the middle and foreground a great crowd of Hebrews are busy in the actual act of gathering the manna. Men, women and children scurry about the ground filling baskets, platters, aprons and even, at the center foreground, a tambourine. Lost amid this wealth of activity is Moses, a small and somewhat indistinct figure standing at the back left. Though he raises his staff pointing to the miracle of the heavenly food provided for the camp, he is clearly a secondary character. It is the group—the community of Hebrews—that presents the main pictorial impact.

Moretto's styling of the figures in the *Gathering of Manna* and his possible reliance on the style of Raphael has received continued attention by scholars, particularly so in the nineteenth century.¹¹ If we consider the female figure at the right in the *Manna* with her broad shoulders and the gentle curve of her back, the affinity for Raphael is certainly apparent. However, in this context, more important is Moretto's—perhaps more northern rather than Roman—attention to genre detail. While in the Giolfino *Manna* there was an indication of figures in a landscape, among the Hebrews of Moretto's painting is displayed every stripe of life. The Brescian artist portrays both male and female, both young and old. On the one hand is the woman who leans on the tablet. In her elegant gown and with jewels in her hair and on her wrist, she cuts a stately figure. By contrast, to her left in the middle ground, a scantily

of *Manna*: Mark; Luke; and individual portraits of *Daniel*, *Jeremiah*, *David*, *Haggai*, *Michah* and *Hosea*. The altarpiece of the *Deposition* is by Bernardo Zenale (c. 1505).

¹¹ For a summary of the Raphael connections, see *Alessandro Bonvicino* 186. See also Gregori, et. al., *Pittura del Cinquecento* 178-79; Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 262; Testori, *Romanino e Moretto* 15; Vasari, *Vite* 6: 506.

clad man sprawls on the ground. With his finger in his mouth he looks into a basket of manna with a dumb expression, a sign of his ignorance. Within the scene are images of a variety of activities that expand the simple scriptural story. For instance, a man at the background climbs a tree to release the bread from heaven that is caught in the leaves. Meanwhile, to the right a shepherd family takes refuge in a cave as their sheep graze before them. Rather unusually in the lower left hand corner sits a monkey wearing a shirt similar to that of the man sitting in profile at the lower right. Though the wealth and complexity of these details continues to be interpreted by scholars, here it is enough to recognize how this unique depiction of the manna story in terms of figure types and actions takes precedence in the painting.

In the Chapel of the Sacrament of the Duomo Vecchio of Venice Romanino provided the *Gathering of Manna* and the *Water from the Rock* (c. 1557-58; figs. 176 and 177).¹² Though the unfortunate state of the paintings prohibits a thorough visual analysis, it is clear that the depiction of a sense of community is important. In both paintings the mass of figures is presented at the very edge of the foreground. In the *Water from the Rock*, in particular, the central figure, with his back turned and both feet skimming the lower border of the image, appears at the brink of fictive and real space. Though there may be only a dozen figures, their dominant presence at the fore of the picture gives the impression of a group of much greater size. In the *Manna* Moses is one of the figures at the foreground. Seated at the right, he is an elderly man wearing robes of a more stately fashion than the peasant-like garb of the Hebrews around him. Holding his staff delicately in his left hand, it is clear that he is the leader figure of the group. However, unlike images in central Italy, such as Bronzino's

Crossing of the Red Sea and the Appointing of Joshua or any of the Sistine Chapel wall frescoes, Romanino's Moses is upstaged by a flurry of activity in the remainder of the picture. The extraordinary posture of the figure at the left side, bending over almost in half to scoop up the manna from the ground, commands the viewer's attention and leads the eye back into the Hebrew company. Here women and men scurry along the ground like gleaners picking up every last morsel of heavenly bread. Standing, kneeling and crouching, some in conversation with one another: a diversity of human activity is portrayed.

Moretto's contribution to the Duomo Vecchio, the *Passover* (c. 1553-54; fig. 140), is also focused on the image of the group.¹³ Like Giolfino's painting of the scene there is an assembly around the Paschal meal. However, Moretto includes not only the male elders in the scene but women and children as well. It is a raucous gathering, food and drink being consumed in the hasty manner that the Scripture prescribes. A corpulent man, nearly bursting out of his tunic, stands in profile at the right, drinking back the last bit of wine in his glass.¹⁴ Behind the table the figures pass food, exchange intimate conversation, or thrust bits of food into their mouths. At the foreground a small girl holds out a basket to an elderly man, probably Moses, seated on a stool. A shaggy little lap dog sitting on the floor between them watches the transaction. The inclusion of so many genre details lends an air of dynamism and variety to the Hebrew community, especially when compared to the central Italian examples of the Exodus scenes discussed in the previous chapter.

¹² Alessandro Nova, *Girolamo Romanino* (Turin: Allemandi, 1994) 347-48. Gaetano Panazza, *Mostra di Girolamo Romanino* (Brescia: Comitato della Mostra di Girolamo Romanino, 1965) 138.

¹³ Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 263.

¹⁴ Though it is not mentioned in Scripture, it has been suggested that the Hebrews drink wine in Moretto's picture as a reference to the Eucharist under both species. Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 225-26.

In addition to Moretto and Romanino's works at San Giovanni Evangelista and the Duomo Vecchio, other Brescian images of the Moses narratives were produced in the period. Moretto's oeuvre also includes two parts of a triptych of 1527-28 of unknown origin: the *Sweetening the Waters of Mara* (Bettoni Cazzago Collection, Brescia) from Exod. 15: 23-25 and the *Brazen Serpent* (private collection, Brescia; fig. 138).¹⁵ Though less crowded with figures than the Brescian works examined so far, the inclusion of genre detail remains, particularly in terms of the landscape. In the *Brazen Serpent* a dirt path winds its way into the background over the rolling green hills leading back to a country church. At the middle ground a craggy rock juts out of the landscape into the blue sky. It adds an abrupt and rough texture to what is otherwise a serene pastoral landscape. In the *Sweetening of the Waters of Mara* the figure of Moses is surrounded by similar rock formations, which appear dangerously jagged. Beyond, a sloping path leads up a green hill to a farmhouse. Below, a lone, hunched figure makes his way along the path with a walking stick.¹⁶

Artists such as Lattanzio Gambara (1530-74), Pordenone (d. 1539) and Benedetto Marone contributed later in the century to the Veneto collection of Exodus images.¹⁷ Both Marone's *Gathering of Manna* in Corpo di Cristo, Brescia and Pordenone's version for the organ shutters of Corpo di Cristo, Valvasone (1535-49;

¹⁵ The third part of the triptych is the *Drunkenness of Noah*. Alessandro Bonvicino 69. Guazzoni, *Moretto* 25-26.

¹⁶ Moretto's oeuvre also includes a rather unusual *Burning Bush* (c. 1525-30; Pinacoteca Tosio-Martinengo, Brescia; fig. 139). The artist produced the fresco (now transferred to canvas) along with ten portraits of prophets for the private chapel of Mattia Ugoni, the Bishop of Famagusta, at the Palace of Ugoni di Novarino, Brescia. A rather elderly Moses with a long white beard and holding a staff looks up in wonder to the bush that burns wildly before him. A crowned woman with her hands clasped in prayer rises out of the flames, seemingly ascending to heaven. The woman has been interpreted as the Church and Moses as pastor of the Church. Gregori, et. al. *Pittura del Cinquecento* 184. Guazzoni, *Moretto* 26-29. Cf. E. Harris, "Mary in the Burning Bush," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 1 (1937-38): 281-86.

¹⁷ There is little surviving information about this life of Marone. See Gregori, et. al., *Pittura del Cinquecento* 256.

fig. 164) with their mass of men, women and children actively taking up the manna build directly on the compositions of the same subject produced by Moretto and Romanino.¹⁸ Gambara's fresco of the *Fall of Manna* (c. 1563), part of an Old and New Testament program for the Chapel of the Sacrament of San Alessandro, is now lost.¹⁹

Jacopo Bassano

Jacopo dal Ponte, called Bassano, (c. 1510-92) also produced narratives of Moses. As the examples to be discussed in this section demonstrate, these subjects were produced on canvases of an intimate scale and, although provenance is known only in a few cases, they were all likely intended for private patronage.²⁰ Although it has only been speculated that Jacopo saw the work of Romanino and Moretto, his moralizing pictures from the middle years of the sixteenth century do appear to draw together the strands of narrative construction exhibited in the Brescian works: an emphasis on the group and a keen attention to genre detail.²¹ This is evident in his *Miracle of the Quails* (private collection, Florence; c. 1554; fig. 108). The community of Hebrews is presented at the immediate foreground of the scene, clustered mainly at the right hand side of the picture. They are a raggedy group, dressed mainly in tattered peasant costumes but some of the children wear nothing at all. Some reach up wildly to the

¹⁸ For an illustration of the Marone painting, see Cope, *Venetian Chapel* fig. 211. For Pordenone's *Gathering of Manna*, see Charles E. Cohen, *The Art of Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1996) 729-31.

¹⁹ Gambara also produced a fresco of the *Brazen Serpent* (c. 1555-58; Brescia, Merli Collection), only a fragment of which survives. It is the last remaining portion of the wider Old and New Testament program from the cloister of the now destroyed Benedictine Monastery of Sant'Eufemia. Pier Virgilio Begni-Redona and Giovanni Vezzoli, *Lattanzio Gambara, Pittore* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1978) 79-80, 238, 240.

²⁰ The patrons of Jacopo's works are cited where known.

sky and into the trees to catch the quails as they descend. Others grovel along the ground. The two women in shawls at the center of the Hebrews tend to a baby and look across to the small group of elders at the left middle ground. Moses stands here, a dramatic figure, casting his left arm out toward the sky and pointing his staff to the shower of quails. However, he is not portrayed as the protagonist of the scene: his downward glance indicates that he does not command the miracle himself but merely directs the will of God.

While Romanino and Moretto integrated Moses into the community of Hebrews, Bassano suggests a comparison. The space that separates the prophet from the group, the middle from the foreground, sets up a distinction between the two, a distinction made more conspicuous by the solitary standing female who looks contemplatively to Moses. Though interpretation is not the task at hand, this narrative device will be addressed in Chapter 4 with reference to Tintoretto's *Moses at Mount Sinai and the Construction of the Golden Calf* at the Madonna dell'Orto. For now it is enough to recognize that Jacopo's depiction of the Exodus narratives, although rooted in the established Veneto traditions outlined earlier, reworks those conventions. In the second half of the sixteenth century the portrayal of these subjects becomes more complicated visually and, as we will see in the subsequent chapters, more complicated theologically.

Furthermore, the *Miracle of the Quails* differs from the works at the Duomo Vecchio and San Giovanni Evangelista in Brescia in another important way: it is not

²¹ W. R. Rearick, "The Life and Works of Jacopo dal Ponte, Called Bassano c. 1510-1592." Brown and Marini, *Jacopo Bassano* 68.

part of a typological program for a chapel.²² The painting was in fact intended for a private collection: it was consigned to the Venetian patrician Domenico Priuli, an important client of Jacopo in the 1550s.²³ Indeed, while Jacopo lived most of his working life in and around Bassano, he was involved in the Venetian market from the 1530s, dealing, as we know from his surviving account book, with the various Venetian governors and landholders in the Bassano region.²⁴ Rooted in the Veneto but maintaining close professional connections with the city of Venice, Jacopo Bassano's images of Moses must have helped to introduce a Veneto approach to the Exodus stories to the Venetian artists.

The *Journey to the Promised Land* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden; 1573) is another of Jacopo's images of Moses that could be seen in Venice, having hung originally in the Palazzo Grimani ai Servi (fig. 233).²⁵ It is one of several Old Testament journey scenes painted by the Bassano workshop from the early 1560s through the late 1570s and is an example of the mature naturalism that, according to Ridolfi, appealed to both connoisseurs and laymen alike.²⁶ As usual, a crowd of peasant-like Hebrews gathers at the foreground. They fill pans, tubs and barrels with the water that has flowed from the rock. There is the typical accumulation of genre detail: crying babies, costumes in various states of disarray and, above all, a wide

²² Based on stylistic grounds, the *Raising of Lazarus* (Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland) has tentatively been suggested as a possible pendant to the *Miracle of the Quails*. Bernard Aikema, *Jacopo Bassano and His Public: Moralizing Pictures in an Age of Reform ca. 1535-1600*, trans. Andrew P. McCormick (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1996) 52.

²³ Aikema, *Bassano* 52. Paola Marini, "Jacopo Bassano Seen Anew," Brown and Marini, *Jacopo Bassano* 25.

²⁴ Marini, "Jacopo Bassano" 22.

²⁵ For an illustration of a comparable, almost mirror, image by Bassano, see fig. 109. The pendant is *Tobias' Journey* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden; 1573). Aikema, *Bassano* 93, n. 81. For further discussion of images of Moses at the Palazzo Grimani ai Servi, see Chapter 7.

²⁶ Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 384. See also Marini, "Jacopo Bassano" 13. Other journey scenes of the Exodus are Bassano's *Journey to the Promised Land* (Prado, Madrid; c. 1565; fig. 109) and the

variety of animals, including dogs, a horse, lambs, a chicken and a goat. Indeed, if it were not for the troupe heading off into the landscape in the background, it would be difficult to distinguish the foreground as anything other than a genre scene. This second group of Hebrews departs from the right. Moses, a small figure but one discernable by the light rays that emanate from his head and the staff in his hand, leads them away past the tents of their camp and into the wilderness. The *Journey to the Promised Land* and other pictures by Jacopo from this later period are contemporary with the Venetian images that will be discussed in the upcoming chapters. As we will see, their similar visual approaches to the Exodus suggest that the Veneto tradition of Moses imagery not only preceded the Venetian one but also grew together with it both in interpretation of style and of meaning.

During his long career, Jacopo and his workshop produced many more images of the narratives of Moses. Ridolfi notes a *Burning Bush*, a *Gathering of Manna and Quails*, a *Water from the Rock*, a *Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law* and a *Brazen Serpent*.²⁷ Surviving today are, in addition to the works already mentioned, at least a *Landscape with Shepherds and Moses and the Burning Bush* by the Bassano workshop (Accademia; c. 1570-75), a *Burning Bush* (Uffizi, Florence; 1572; fig. 110), which will be discussed briefly in Chapter 4, and an *Autumn with Moses Receiving the Law* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum; c. 1575; fig. 111), part of a series of the four seasons.²⁸ The *Seasons*, painted nearly contemporaneously with the journeys,

Journey to the Promised Land by the Bassano workshop (Accademia; c. 1565-70). Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia...secolo XVI* cat. 32.

²⁷ Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 392-93.

²⁸ For the *Landscape with Shepherds and Moses*, see Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia...secolo XVI* cat. 38. For the *Autumn*, see Aikema, *Bassano* 131-38. It has been suggested that of the surviving set in Vienna, only *Summer* and *Autumn* are autograph. Rearick, "Life and Works" 145. The three other *Seasons* include the *Fall of Man* (spring), the *Sacrifice of Abraham* (summer) and *Christ Carrying the Cross* (winter).

bring the genre aspects of the Bassano paintings into greatest prominence. In the *Autumn*, the sacred component, *Moses Receiving the Law*, is barely perceptible, tucked away into the upper right hand corner. By contrast, the foreground scene of peasants picking grapes and pressing wine in a country landscape dominates the painting. These figures cannot be construed as Hebrews because their actions do not in any way correlate with Scripture. It is strictly a secular subject. Nevertheless, as Aikema points out, the *Seasons* were understood as religious subjects: one set owned by the cavalier Simon Lando was donated to Santa Maria Maggiore.²⁹

While Jacopo remained in the provinces, his sons Francesco (1549-92) and Leandro (1557-1622) settled in Venice. Following their father's style, they continued to promote his narrative approach in their own work. Francesco's *Gathering of Manna* (fig. 107), one of a group of five panels of Old and New Testament subjects for the sacristy tabernacle at the Redentore, features narrative components that are reminiscent of Jacopo's *Journey to the Promised Land*.³⁰ The groups of Hebrews at the fore and backgrounds include both sexes and a range of ages diligently collecting the manna from the ground. Though the painting is narrow in format, the miraculous scene is set within a pastoral landscape of rolling hills with the peaks of the camp tents rising on the horizon.

Conclusion

Venice and the Veneto had no monopoly on images of Moses. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, central Italy produced numerous examples of this subject matter on

²⁹ Aikema, *Bassano* 137.

the monumental scale. However, the distinctive political connotations of these images set them apart from the Veneto paintings of the same subjects. While the frescoes of the Chapel of Eleonora, the Vatican Logge and the Sistine Chapel may be linked with an individual or the institution of an individual, in Verona and Brescia the works were integrated into decorative programs for chapels of the sacrament. They were commissioned by groups, usually the *scuole del sacramento*, and intended to be viewed by a more general public. Perhaps as a result of this, these images focus distinctively on the Hebrew community as a whole, embracing the diversity of life within it.

To some degree artists further a field in the north and in central Italy also called attention to genre detail in their images of Moses. The *Gathering of Manna* (National Gallery of Art, Washington; c. 1505; fig. 115) by Bartolommeo Suardi, called Bramantino (c. 1465-1530), does incorporate men, women and children, hinting at the variety of the Hebrew camp.³¹ Bacchiacca's (1494-1557) *Water from the Rock* (Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland; 1530s) is filled with unusual details of figure types, costumes and animals but his *Gathering of Manna* (National Gallery of Art, Washington; 1540-55; fig. 105) returns to a central Italian aesthetic relying on a more ordered classicism.³² These cannot compare to the numerous panoramas of everyday life that the Veneto artists depicted. It was the artists of

³⁰ There were probably originally eight panels. In addition to the *Gathering of Manna*, the surviving panels are *David and Abimelech*, the *Last Supper*, the *Supper at Emmaus* and the *Resurrection*. Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 199, n. 2.

³¹ Bramantino's painting was possibly used as a predella panel. Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection, Italian Schools XV-XVI Century* (London: Phaidon, 1968) 19.

³² Hugh Brigstocke, *Italian and Spanish Paintings in the National Gallery of Scotland*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 1993) cat. 2291. Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection, Italian Schools XVI-XVIII Century* (London: Phaidon, 1973) 8. Although these images do not form a pair, they may have a common prototype: the series of Old Testament scenes painted for a triumphal arch for the Festa di San Felice. Vasari, *Vite* 6: 451-52.

Brescia and Bassano, in particular, who developed this style and introduced it into the Venetian artistic milieu, helping to determine the trajectory of Venetian images of Moses from the middle of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth century.

Images of Moses in Venice

Images of the narratives of Moses in sixteenth-century Venice may be considered in three camps (see the Appendix): the images of the first half of the century, which portray a variety of subjects by several different artists; the rise of the imagery at mid century, particularly of the miracles in the desert, by the hand of Tintoretto; and the images of the final two decades of the century and the early years of the seventeenth century by artists following the lead set by Tintoretto. Additionally, a second strand of imagery appears in the later years of the century, initiated by Paolo Veronese with repercussions later in the seventeenth and in the eighteenth century. In order to establish the stylistic basis for the works discussed in the later chapters, the focus here will be on the first half of the century, including Tintoretto's early images of Moses preceding his masterpiece at the Madonna dell'Orto, c. 1562-63.

The First Half of the Sixteenth Century

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the corpus of Venetian images of Moses does not exhibit the thematic continuity found on the mainland in the same period. No one subject or type of subject appears to dominate nor does any particular artist come to the fore as an "Exodus painter." Nevertheless, there are at least six images of the Moses narratives produced in this period and they lay the local groundwork for narrative pictorial execution that follows in the subsequent decades.

Pictures of the Exodus narratives that precede the Passover are uncommon in the early years of the century and do not gain currency until several decades later when Veronese and, to a lesser extent, Tintoretto produce studies of the Finding of Moses.³³ Nonetheless, in the first years of the century there are two exceptions: a *Burning Bush* (Courtauld Gallery, London; c. 1500; fig. 129) and a *Trial of Moses* (Uffizi, Florence; c. 1505; fig. 128), both attributed to Giorgione (1477-1510).³⁴ Although both are of unknown provenance, the pastoral nature of the paintings suggests that they were likely owned by private patrons. And it is this pastoral component that is of interest here, particularly that of the *Burning Bush*. Unlike the San Marco mosaic or the paintings in the Sistine Chapel and Vatican Logge, all of which imply a certain drama at the heart of the story (e.g. the surprise of Moses or the rising flames of the bush), the Giorgione painting reflects a remarkable calm. The young Moses sits on the mossy earth and gently removes his shoes. On the opposite side of the leafy tree on which he leans, a quiet flock of sheep lingers. To the left an orange glow is emitted from underneath the bush as God the Father descends from the clouds above. The blue hills and still water in the distance further add to the tranquility of the scene. Although this emphasis on the pastoral approach to an Exodus narrative is unique to an artist of Giorgione's generation, there is a hint of its serenity in Tintoretto's reworking of the story for the ceiling of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco (fig. 205). The young Moses curls in on himself with his back arched and

³³ On the more intimate scale, illustrations of the early life of Moses may be found in print series of the entirety of the Exodus stories. See, for example, Antonio Tempesta's printed series of two hundred and twenty illustrations of the Old Testament in the collection of the British Museum. For illustrations, see Sebastian Buffa, ed., *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 35 (New York: Abaris) 32-44.

³⁴ For the *Burning Bush*, see *Courtauld Gallery Paintings: Illustrated Catalogue*, CD-ROM (London: Courtauld Institute of Art, 1998) Courtauld inventory no. p.1947.lf.172. The *Trial of Moses* is one of a pair with the *Judgement of Solomon*. See Dalia Haitovsky, "Giorgione's *Trial of Moses*: A New Look," *Jewish Art* 16/17 (1990-91): 20-29.

his arm reaching over to cover his closed eyes. Meanwhile, God advances slowly on a cushion of cloud. The image is absent of the dramatic thrust of limbs and hurtling bodies that characterize the other ceiling paintings of the Scuola. Nevertheless, the comparison between the Tintoretto work and the Giorgionesque piece cannot be taken too far. Any impression made on artists working later in the century on the Moses narratives would likely have been the result of the wider oeuvre of Giorgione and his followers working in this pastoral style.³⁵

However, the atmosphere of calm that pervades this early sixteenth-century *Burning Bush* does point to an essential component of all of the later Venetian images of the Exodus stories: a shift of focus away from Moses as the central protagonist. Although Moses is literally central to the scene, his quiet composure as he gently removes his shoes almost suggests that he is unaware of the miraculous vision taking place. Absent of any sense of amazement or wonder, he could be any simple shepherd resting in a pasture rather than the man being called to be the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. Though unique in its style and subject in the tradition traced here, this image is an early indicator of the Venetian approach to the Exodus stories that is less interested in the biography of Moses than its central Italian counterparts were.³⁶

A more conventional subject for the period was, of course, the Drowning of Pharaoh. As discussed in the previous chapter, there were at least three examples of

³⁵ Another image of the *Burning Bush* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence; fig. 224) of unrecorded provenance was produced later in the century in 1562. It was painted by Paolo Veronese (1528-88) and draws more directly on the dramatic interpretation of the story: Moses collapses on his knees the bush is engulfed in flames, God the Father bursts out of a cloud and an angel tumbles head first out of the sky. Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, *Veronese* (Milan: Electa, 1995) cat. 147. For an alternative dating of 1547, see W.R. Rearick, *The Art of Paolo Veronese 1528-1588* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1988) cat. 3.

³⁶ This Venetian approach will be explored in the subsequent chapters.

this subject produced in the first quarter of the sixteenth century: two paintings by Jan van Scorel and Previtali; and Titian's monumental woodcut. Although these pictures vary in media and stylistic rendering, it is likely that, given their close dates of production, they are linked by a general Venetian sense of miraculous delivery after the war with the League of Cambrai.³⁷ Given this historical significance, it is odd that these images do not seem to have made an impact on the production of future images of Moses. The Red Sea story is only very occasionally depicted in the subsequent decades. As far as we know, when it is represented, it is always a part of a larger Exodus program (e.g. at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and at San Giacomo dall'Orio) and never as a solitary image like the Titian and Scorel nor as a pendant like the Previtali, which accompanies *Christ in Limbo*. However, the two paintings and the Titian print in particular do promote the earliest Venetian understanding of the Chosen People as the fundamental subject of the stories of Exodus. As described in Chapter 2, in the woodcut the figure of Moses is subsumed into a greater understanding of the group, of the Hebrews as a communal force. Like the Exodus pictures that were being produced in the Veneto at this time, the *Drowning of Pharaoh* elevates the importance of the group and relegates the biography of Moses. In addition, Titian's print includes the genre detail—such as the nursing woman and the defecating dog—that was a hallmark of images of Moses on the mainland.

By the fifth decade of the century, the Venetian pictorial approach to the Exodus was encompassing more wholeheartedly the stylistic interests and narrative concerns already established in the Veneto: the emphasis on the miracles in the desert; the importance of the group; and the incorporation of genre detail. Nowhere is this

³⁷ See Chapter 2.

clearer than in the *Gathering of the Manna and Quails* (Accademia, Venice; c. 1539; fig. 114) by Bonifacio de' Pitati (1487-1553).³⁸ Bonifacio moved to Venice from Verona sometime between 1505 and 1515. In 1539 he began work on the first room of the Monte Nuovissimo, part of the extensive decorative work that was taking place at the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi (the state Treasury). The *Gathering of Manna and Quails* was installed that year and is the only Old Testament scene displayed in the room.³⁹ Set within a triplet of arches, the single canvas links together in an unbroken sequence three narratives: the call for food in the desert, the arrival of the quails and the gathering of manna. On the far left the Hebrews cluster around Aaron at the foreground and demand food. Two fall on their knees to beg. Meanwhile, in the background Moses kneels on a raised hilltop. With arms outstretched and his face turned to the open sky, he implores the invisible God for food to feed the hungry Hebrews. In the center is the chaotic mass of the camp, grasping wildly for the miraculous arrival of the quails. Finally, at the right, another group, more composed than the first, fill platters and urns with the falling manna. Bonifacio blends the three stories one into the next in two ways: in the background this is accomplished with the continuous rolling hills of the landscape and collection of tents; in the foreground it is the uninterrupted mass of people pushed forward. This second narrative technique is reminiscent of that used by Moretto for the same subject at San Giovanni Evangelista

³⁸ Boschini, *Le minere* 274. Philip Cottrell, "Corporate Colors: Bonifacio and Tintoretto at the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi in Venice," *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000): 658-78. Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia...secolo XVI* cat. 84. Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 286. Simonetta Simonetti, "Profilo di Bonifacio de' Pitati," *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 15 (1986): cat. 37.

³⁹ The other paintings were: *Saints Mark, Anthony and Thomas* (Bonifacio, 1539-40); *Saints Sebastian, Leonard and James* (Bonifacio, 1540-41); *Allegory of the Monte Nuovissimo* (Vitruvio Buonconsiglio, 1559); *Madonna and Child* (Giovanni Bellini, 1470-80); *Venice Crowning the Virtue of War* (Buonconsiglio, 1551); *Alexander, Saints Constantine and Victor* (Bonifacio, 1543-44); *Saints Andrew, John the Evangelist and Anthony Abbott* (Bonifacio, c. 1546); *Saints Peter, John the Baptist and Philip*

where the density of figures at the fore suggests a vast group. There is some interest in including genre details, particularly regarding the inclusion of the different sexes and ages. This may well have proved influential for the young Jacopo Bassano who, before he returned to the Veneto, was Bonifacio's assistant.⁴⁰ Like Titian's woodcut, Bonifacio's narrative construction combines genre with large group compositions and presents a vigorous pictorial approach to the Exodus.

Like the Veneto examples discussed previously, the *Gathering of Manna and Quails* dealt with the subject of the desert miracles. However, it is unusual in that it was intended for a state building rather than a sacred setting. Unlike the Ducal Palace, where there is a distinct lack of images of Moses, possibly to avoid associations with the doge, there could be no fear of the aggrandizement of the individual at the Camerlenghi, a complex bureaucratic department. The strong pictorial emphasis on the group, which links the three events, and the displacement of Moses to the far background appear in line with the nature of the setting.^{40b} Though more work needs to be done on Bonifacio's painting before a definitive interpretation of the subject may be offered, one scholar has, in fact, placed it in a wider analysis of the commissioning of works at the Camerlenghi as a means of engendering and strengthening the corporate ethos of Venetian society.⁴¹ This point will be drawn out further in Chapter 5 with reference to Tintoretto's work for the Scuola di San Rocco.

After the installation of the *Gathering of Manna and Quails* in 1539, the images of Moses in Venice focus increasingly on the desert miracles as subjects and are in the majority of cases until 1580 intended for sacred settings. In the remainder of

(Bonifacio, 1545-46); and *Saints Renier, Francis and Melchior* (Bonifacio, 1545-46). Cottrell, "Corporate Colors" 674.

⁴⁰ Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 386.

^{40b} The impact of central Italian Mannerism may also have played a role in the de-centering of Moses in this and other compositions discussed in this thesis.

the first half of the sixteenth century, these include a *Crossing of the Red Sea*, part of a set of wall paintings in the sacristy of San Sebastiano, by the school of Bonifacio and a small oil painting of the *Brazen Serpent*, also in the San Sebastiano sacristy, possibly by Andrea Schiavone (fig. 179).⁴² Another important example is the *Fall of Manna* (c. 1550; fig. 178) by Giuseppe Porta (c. 1520 - c. 1575), known as Salviati out of homage to the Florentine painter of that name.⁴³ The work was intended as a ceiling painting for the refectory of Santo Spirito in Isola (now in the choir of Santa Maria della Salute) and was originally accompanied by paintings of *Elijah Nourished by the Angel* and *Habakkuk Taken to David*, confirming its Eucharistic theme. Salviati was working in Venice from 1539 and had already produced a ceiling panel of the *Fall of Manna* (private collection, Milan; c. 1540-45), which may have been intended for the Villa Priuli in Treviso.⁴⁴ However, the composition of the first painting is planar. The Santo Spirito example is done in full *di sotto in sù*. The circular composition appears like an oculus. Moses stands at the center with his arms outstretched in witness to the miracle. Two light rays blaze out of his forehead. The Hebrews cluster around him gathering up the manna. A woman crawls across the ground to collect the food as athletic looking men enter from either side with containers to store it. At the right a little child pushes his hand into his mouth as he takes a taste of the manna. The central position of Moses and the graceful, elongated

⁴¹ Cottrell, "Corporate Colors" 665.

⁴² The other sacristy wall paintings are: *Baptism of Christ; Sacrifice of Abraham; Nativity; Vision of Jacob; Agony in the Garden*. Touring Club Italiano, *Venezia e dintorni*, 2nd ed., Guida d'Italia (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1969) 342. For the *Brazen Serpent*, see Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. A112. Early sources suggest that the *Brazen Serpent* was painted by Tintoretto. Boschini, *Le minere* 337. Raffaello Borghini, *Il riposo di Raffaello Borghini* (Florence, 1584) 552.

⁴³ Boschini, *Le minere* 349. *Da Tiziano a El Greco: Per la storia del Manierismo a Venezia 1540-1590* (Milan: Electa, 1981) cat. 13. See also Marco Boschini, *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, 1660, ed. Anna Pallucchini (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culture, 1966) 183.

figures betray Salviati's central Italian Mannerist aesthetic. Nevertheless, the choreography of the figures—the dramatic movements, the vigorous bodies and the tight composition—points to the culmination of the Venetian approach to the Exodus narratives by the hand of Tintoretto in the second half of the sixteenth century that will be the focus of the subsequent chapters.

Tintoretto's Early Development of Images of Moses

Jacopo Tintoretto (1519-94) produced more images of Moses than any other sixteenth-century Venetian artist. He was the first to address repeatedly the subjects of the Exodus; he was the first to paint these subjects on an extraordinarily monumental scale; and he was also the first artist to exhibit a fully realized program of Moses images. Tintoretto's paintings at the Madonna dell'Orto, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and San Giorgio Maggiore are his most powerful works of Moses in terms of scale and influence. However, the first of these was not produced until c. 1562. By that date, Tintoretto had already tackled the subjects of the Exodus numerous times.

Tintoretto began painting images of the narratives of Moses in the 1540s and '50s. At least three times in this period he considered the story of the golden calf. The *Adoration of the Golden Calf* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; c. 1545; fig. 183) and the *Construction of the Golden Calf* (private collection, Turin; c. 1545; fig. 184) were likely made as cassone decorations.⁴⁵ Neither example includes the figure of Moses in the scene, thus fully emphasizing the importance of the group. However, within these group images the paintings present a range of events. In the Vienna

⁴⁴ *Da Tiziano* cat. 10, 88. David McTavish, *Giuseppe Porta Called Giuseppe Salviati*, diss. Courtauld Institute of Art, 1978 (New York: Garland, 1981) 200-04.

picture a man donates gold to the high priest Aaron seated on a dais while at the back right a group dances around the calf raised on an altar. In the Turin example women remove earrings, craftsmen erect the model of the calf and the scaffold for its altar, and elders address Aaron. It is precisely this narrative complexity that made the Exodus a rich source for any history painter and, as we will see in Chapter 4, particularly for Tintoretto.

A decade later, Tintoretto took on this subject again on a somewhat larger scale in the *Adoration of the Golden Calf* (National Gallery of Art, Washington; c. 1555; fig. 188).⁴⁶ The canvas is, unfortunately, cropped at the top, thus cutting off the scene at the right of Moses receiving the tablets of the Law on Mount Sinai. Nevertheless, what remains of the picture exhibits the artist's attempt to incorporate the many details of the narrative within an even further expanded illustration of life in the Hebrew camp. At the center Aaron receives the donation of gold while in the background some women are already dancing around the calf raised on an altar. Groups of men, women and children are located in various positions—like smaller genre “pockets”—within the broader composition. At the right, a group gathers around a small table. One woman feeds a small child a piece of fruit while another looks on. A young man walks by carrying a platter of fruits while an elderly man hunches over the little assembly. Another vignette is inserted into the background where the canvases of two tents are thrown back to reveal small groups meeting inside. In these instances Tintoretto has supplemented the Scriptural narrative with genre details in a way that we have already seen on the mainland.

⁴⁵ Rodolfo Pallucchini and Paola Rossi, *Tintoretto: le opere sacre e profane* (Milan: Electa, 1982) cats. 54 and 95.

⁴⁶ Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 180. Shapley, *Italian Schools XVI-XVIII Century* 54.

However, most notable about the Washington *Adoration* is the attempt to suggest a multitude of Hebrews. By clustering several figures together in the middle ground, Tintoretto creates the sense that the camp is a large one. This technique is advanced further in the contemporary *Water from the Rock* (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt; c. 1555; fig. 189) where the crowd of Hebrews runs across the background like a wall.⁴⁷ These images do highlight the importance of the group. However, with so many spindly bodies arranged like a backdrop, they lack the narrative subtlety that was evident in the Veneto examples where a crowd is suggested by the foreground presentation of a few tightly choreographed figures.⁴⁸

The lack of stylistic refinement in these images of Moses demonstrates that, when he produced them, Tintoretto was still in the early stages of his artistic career, still struggling to find a consistent signature style. Indeed, he was apprenticed only in the 1530s and did not begin to sign himself as “master” until 1539.⁴⁹ At this time, the Venetian artistic milieu was in a state of tension. On the one hand, Titian dominated the scene with his Venetian sense of naturalism. On the other hand, as artists such as Giuseppe Salviati were introduced to Venice, there was a burgeoning interest in the Mannerist style of central Italy.⁵⁰ The notorious story of the motto placed above the door to his studio—*il disegno di Michel Angelo e’l colorito di Titiano*—indicates Tintoretto’s effort to reconcile these two trends.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 177.

⁴⁸ The figure type employed in the *Water from the Rock* recalls the manner of Andrea Schiavone, with whom Tintoretto associated in the mid 1540s. For Tintoretto’s relationship with Schiavone, see Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity* (London: Reaktion, 1999) 38. Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* 1: 20-21.

⁴⁹ Nichols, *Tintoretto* 6, 29. Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* 1: 14.

⁵⁰ For more on the state of the Venetian artistic milieu c. 1540, see Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* 12-14.

⁵¹ Carlo Ridolfi, *Vite dei Tintoretto*, 1648 (Venice: Filippi, 1994) 7.

In 1548 when he submitted the *Miracle of the Slave* (fig. 186) to the Scuola Grande di San Marco, it seemed that he had accomplished successfully his personal challenge of marrying the styles of the two great painters of the early sixteenth century. The muscularity of the figures and their dynamic movement demonstrate Tintoretto's study of Michelangelo while the modeling of flesh and of drapery point to an awareness of Titian. In addition, the *Miracle of the Slave* exhibits a consummate development of the pictorial narrative of a group. On the left, about a dozen figures gather in a tight assembly at the right as they lean over the nude slave in a synchronized movement of bodies. The raking angle on which they are set, accentuated by the foreshortening of the slave, suggests a group much larger than the actual number of figures presented. This diagonal is mirrored in the position of the seated figures at the right. The angle of the figures at left and right pushes the action forward, again generating the effect of a large crowd. However, because the actual number of figures is small, individuals do not get lost in a mob. In fact, each individual is distinguished by his costume: shining armor; a feathered turban; or a tall conical hat. The figure of a single woman, back turned and holding a babe in arms, completes this well-choreographed staging of characters.⁵²

It would seem that the narrative success of the *Miracle of the Slave* should have marked a watershed for Tintoretto and set the standard for his Exodus subjects where the figuring of the group is of such pronounced importance both pictorially and thematically. However, as we have seen with the Washington *Adoration of the Golden*

⁵² The theatricality of Tintoretto's compositions has been a subject of growing interest. Sergio Marinelli takes a theoretical look to the motivations and logic behind Tintoretto's compositional choices. Sergio Marinelli, "Aspetti della teatralità nell'opera di Jacopo Tintoretto," Rossi and Puppi, *Jacopo Tintoretto* 263-66. Pham Van Khanh's unpublished doctoral dissertation describes Tintoretto as a stage designer who conceived pictures as theatrical performances. Pham Van Khanh, abstract, "Theatricality in Tintoretto's Religious Painting," diss., McGill U, 1996.

Calf and the Frankfurt *Water from the Rock*, this was not the case. Tintoretto's masterful handling of a group narrative in 1548 did not preclude him in the next decade from retreating to a less accomplished style.⁵³ In the *Lives*, Vasari speaks unsympathetically of this shifting of manners. He notes that one of Tintoretto's marketing techniques was to modify his pictorial approach in order to please patrons and gain commissions from various groups: one way or another, he would do it—"vuol farlo ad ogni modo."⁵⁴ The provenance of the Washington and Frankfurt pictures is unknown. So it cannot definitively be said to whose taste these awkward Exodus narratives appealed. However, the size and lateral composition of both paintings suggest that they may have originally hung on chapel walls as *lateralis*.⁵⁵ This type of painting is associated distinctly with the *scuole del sacramento*.

Though many of the images of Moses by artists of the later sixteenth century are connected with the *scuole del sacramento*, only Tintoretto's late *Miracle of the Manna* (fig. 216) at San Giorgio Maggiore was painted for a chapel of reservation.^{54b} Nevertheless, from 1547 when he painted his first version of the *Last Supper* (fig. 185) at San Marcuola, Tintoretto worked with the *scuole* on at least nine known occasions in his career. Scholars have already analyzed the influence of the precepts of the *scuole del sacramento* on Tintoretto's style and thematic approach to Scriptural narratives, including the emphasis on the group and an appeal to a "lay

⁵³ This delicate figure type that Tintoretto employed in the 1550s has been compared with that of Vittore Carpaccio (c.1460-1526). For more on this subject with reference to Tintoretto's *Voyage of Saint Ursula and the Virgins* (San Lazzaro dei Mendicanti, Venice; 1550-55), see Nichols, *Tintoretto* 63.

⁵⁴ Vasari, *Vite* 6: 593. For more on Tintoretto's competitive drive, see Paul Hills, "Tintoretto's Marketing," *Venedig und Oberdeutschland in der Renaissance. Beziehungen zwischen Kunst und Wirtschaft*, eds. B. Roeck, Klaus Bergdolt and Andrew John Martin, Studi 9 (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993): 107-120; and Nichols, *Tintoretto* esp. Chapter 3.

^{54b} Though decorating a chapel of reservation, Tintoretto's painting was not commissioned by a *scuola del sacramento* but by the resident Benedictine Order. For details of the commission, see Tracy Elizabeth Cooper, "The History and Decoration of the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice," diss., Princeton U, 1990, 223-25.

aesthetic” that integrated genre detail into the wider narrative.⁵⁶ For instance, in the San Marcuola *Last Supper*, Tintoretto presents a tight circle of men around a table. Christ, the central protagonist, is set off by his bright halo yet his down-cast eyes and withdrawn gestures prevent his figure from standing out boldly from the other men. The serving women entering from either side with a chalice and a platter underline the Eucharistic meaning of the painting as well as contribute, like the tabby cat at the lower right, to the immediacy of the image. Like Moretto’s *Passover* the sacred meaning of the San Marcuola *Last Supper* is subsumed into an expanded visual narrative.

Conclusion

In the first half of the sixteenth century artists in Venice were experimenting with the narrative possibilities of the Exodus. Shifting focus away from Moses and to the Hebrew community as a whole, these works naturally concentrate on the images of the Passover and the miracles in the desert, themes more appropriate in the context set out in Chapter 2. Tintoretto emerges out of this milieu, strongly influenced by Veneto tradition but continuing to test and exploit the complexity of the narratives. At the same time, his thematic approach to religious painting more generally was coming more profoundly under the influence of the *scuole del sacramento*. These confraternities, which already had a strong tradition of Mosaic imagery on the mainland, emphasized in the artworks they commissioned the importance of the group

⁵⁵ Another early Moses image by Tintoretto that appeared in a church was the *Brazen Serpent* located at the foot of a crucifix at SS Giovanni e Paolo (now lost). Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 67. Boschini, *Le minere* 217.

⁵⁶ Paul Hills, “Piety and Patronage in Cinquecento Venice: Tintoretto and the Scuole del Sacramento,” *Art History* 6 (1983): 30-43. Tom Nichols, “Tintoretto’s Poverty,” *New Interpretations of Venetian*

via an accessible aesthetic that relied heavily on genre detail. This combination of the burgeoning Venetian approach to the Exodus and the *scuola del sacramento* approach to religious art in general laid the foundation for Tintoretto's revolutionary revision of the narratives of Moses in the second half of the century.

At the Madonna dell'Orto, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and San Giorgio Maggiore, Tintoretto envisioned the Exodus stories on a scale grander than any discussed heretofore. While these works express in the most consummate manner the narrative interests of the group and of genre detail that so occupied the artists of Venice and the Veneto, they also, like the contemporary works of Jacopo Bassano on the mainland, rework these traditions, interpreting these old subjects in new and more complex ways. In the work of Tintoretto we will see how these new stylistic approaches delved into the theological implications of the stories in a manner never attempted before. Although each of Tintoretto's three programs was produced for a corporate patron, the social situations of the patrons within the city of Venice differed. The following three chapters explore individually the ways in which Tintoretto tuned in to the specific circumstances of his patrons and, exploiting the rich artistic heritage that he inherited, produced new visualizations of the Moses narratives that influenced Venetian understanding of the Exodus into the seventeenth century.

Chapter 4

The Main Chapel of the Madonna dell'Orto

Introduction

In circa 1562-63 Tintoretto produced the first truly colossal narrative of Moses in Venice. Painted for the left lateral wall of the main chapel of the Madonna dell'Orto, the image is part of a complete program of paintings and frescoes. Ridolfi's famous account of the origin of the main chapel cycle proposes that Tintoretto, whose mind was continually inventing new and more ambitious challenges, presented his grand plan for the main chapel to the church fathers. When the prior laughed, noting that there was no way that the church could afford to pay for such an expensive decorative scheme, Tintoretto offered his services for only the cost of expenses.¹ Though Ridolfi's story surely embellishes history somewhat, it is in proportion to the artistic ambition of the final product: in painting on such a scale and with such narrative complexity, Tintoretto indubitably sought to create something innovative.²

¹ Ridolfi, *Vite* 14. Tintoretto's total payment was only 100 ducats. See Nichols, *Tintoretto* 241.

² Scholars accept in general Ridolfi's account, noting that the equally monumental right lateral wall painting of the *Last Judgement* can be understood as a challenge to Michelangelo's famous rendition of the subject in the Sistine Chapel. For the most recent discussion of the influence of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*, see Susanne Richter, *Jacopo Tintoretto und die Kirche der Madonna dell'Orto zu Venedig: Studien zur künstlerischen Rezeption von Michelangelos Jüngstem Gericht in Italien nach 1540*, Beiträge zur Kunstwissenschaft 77 (Munich: Scaneg, 2000). The degree to which Tintoretto was involved in the initial development of the iconography of the program continues to prompt debate. For discussions on potential iconographic sources and the influence of patronage, see Michael Douglas-Scott, "Art Patronage and the Function of Images at the Madonna dell'Orto in Venice under the Secular Canons of San Giorgio in Alga circa 1462-1668," diss., London U, 1996; Paul Hills, "Tintoretto's Marketing," *Venedig und Oberdeutschland in der Renaissance: Beziehungen zwischen Kunst und Wirtschaft*, Studi 9 (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993) 113-15; Dagmar Knöpfel, "Sui dipinti di Tintoretto per il coro della Madonna dell'Orto," *Arte Veneta* 38 (1984): 149-54; Antonio Niero, "Riflessioni sui Tintoretto del presbiterio," in Lino Moretti, Antonio Niero and Paola Rossi, *Chiesa del Tintoretto: Madonna dell'Orto* (Venice: Parrocchia Madonna dell'Orto, 1994) 157-67; Antonio Niero, "Riforma cattolica e Concilio di Trento a Venezia," *Cultura e società nel Rinascimento tra riforme e manierismi*, eds. Vittore Branca and Carlo Ossola (Florence: Olschki, 1984) 77-96; Anna Pallucchini, "Considerazioni sui grandi teleri del Tintoretto della Madonna dell'Orto," *Arte Veneta* 23 (1969): 54-

The *Moses at Mount Sinai and the Blasphemy of the Hebrews* (fig. 191-94) will be considered here as the pivotal moment in the Venetian visual understanding of the Exodus. While rooted in the Veneto traditions reviewed in the previous Chapter, Tintoretto's conception of the narrative goes beyond standard typologies and sets up a contrast that is exceptional in its visual impact. The rendering of the subject can then be analyzed in two ways: in general theological terms and in local terms specific to Venice and the Madonna dell'Orto parish. As we will see, Tintoretto grounds the lower half of his painting in a subject of particular Venetian significance while he uses the upper portion as a space to explore more universal theology that was recently being renewed in the Church in the age of the Counter Reform. Parallels can be drawn with the spiritual writing of the early church father Gregory of Nyssa, thus linking the scheme to the deepest of Venetian religious roots.

The Program

The Chapel as It Was Meant to Be

The main components of Tintoretto's main chapel program at the Madonna dell'Orto are the two lateral paintings, measuring a monumental 1450 x 590 cm. The canvas to the left of the altar conflates two events from the Old Testament book of Exodus:

Moses at Mount Sinai in the upper register and the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* below.³

To the right of the altar is the *Last Judgement* (fig. 195-96).⁴ Additionally, there are

68; and Ruggero Rugolo, "Il simbolismo dei grandi teleri custoditi nel presbiterio della Madonna dell'Orto," in Rossi and Puppi, *Tintoretto* 213-223.

³ Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 236. Though the lower portion of the painting is often titled the *Worship of the Golden Calf*, it has been pointed out that the scene actually portrays the *Construction* [or *Making*] of the Golden Calf. David Rogers, "Tintoretto's Golden Calf," *Burlington* 119 (1979): 715. I have chosen to use the title the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews*, a descriptive title used by Ridolfi: "l'attione esecranda degli Hebrei." Ridolfi, *Vite* 16.

⁴ Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 237.

four individual canvases of the *Cardinal Virtues*—*Temperance, Justice, Prudence* and *Fortitude*—in the upper register of the apse, separated by the ribs of the vault (figs. 197-98).⁵

The conservation efforts of 1969 and recent documentary research show that the chapel today bears little resemblance to what was visible to the mid sixteenth-century viewer (fig. 5 and 6).⁶ Originally, a large wooden statue of Saint Christopher (c. 1431) was located in a niche at the back wall of the main chapel, which has since been replaced by Palma Giovane's *Annunciation*. Above, the personified figure of *Faith*, now located in the central section of the apse, was not part of Tintoretto's original program.⁷ Conservation work has confirmed that it is an anonymous seventeenth-century production.⁸ However, the *Virtues* were not alone in the apse. According to Borghini the *Virtues* were accompanied by frescoed architecture with angels blowing trumpets in the vault: "e nella cupola dell'Altare maggiore, vi ha finta una architettura bellissima à fresco con Angeli, che suonano trombe, e sopra l'altare."⁹ In the keystone of the vault there was also displayed the dove of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

The Veneto Roots of Style and Composition

Tintoretto's *Moses at Mount Sinai and the Blasphemy of the Hebrews* is rooted stylistically in the sixteenth-century Veneto tradition of Exodus images. By drawing

⁵ Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 238-41.

⁶ For an account of the restoration of the main chapel, see Ashley Clarke and Philip Rylands, *Restoring Venice: The Church of the Madonna dell'Orto* (London: Elek, 1977) 53-61, 68-80.

⁷ Neither Raffaello Borghini nor Marco Boschini mentions a *Faith* figure in their discussions of Tintoretto's *Virtues*. Borghini, *Il riposo* 552-53. Boschini, *Le minere* 446-47.

⁸ Clarke and Rylands, *Restoring Venice* 54 and 55. See also Paola Rossi, "Jacopo Tintoretto alla Madonna dell'Orto," in Moretti, Niero and Rossi, *Tintoretto* 126-27.

⁹ Borghini, *Il Riposo* 553.

out and visually expanding on a narrative from the Hebrews' desert wanderings, the artist emphasizes the group and integrates contemporary genre detail. The lower portion of the painting makes this most obvious and will therefore be discussed at length here before proceeding to investigate its local significance. The upper half, which focuses on the meeting of Moses and God the Father, steers the depiction of the prophet away from the heroic and regal image that was popular in central Italy (see Chapter 2) to a portrayal of a universal man that is in essence a Venetian interpretation of Counter Reform spirituality. This unique image will be discussed separately, later in the chapter.

The lower half of the painting focuses on the procession of the gold and of the model of the calf. The Bible explains that Moses, after being called by Yahweh, left the Hebrews for forty days under the supervision of Aaron and Hur at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exod. 24: 12-18). Frustrated with Moses' long absence, the Hebrews demand that Aaron provide them with a god as their head. Aaron instructs the crowd to "strip off the gold rings in the ears" of the Hebrew wives, sons and daughters and to bring them to him. He then melts the treasures to cast the idol calf (Exod. 32: 1-4). Tintoretto illustrates the moment just prior to the casting of the model. Aaron sits to the far right as coordinator of the production. His long white beard and the notable bald spot at the back of his head indicate his age and, by extension, his position as substitute leader of the Hebrew community. Another elderly man, who is perhaps Hur, holds a pair of calipers and hunches down to address Aaron. He points back to the model possibly asking where it should be placed or what should be done next. Aaron responds by gesturing out of the picture plane. At their feet is a pile of gold

¹⁰ Douglas-Scott, "Art Patronage" 247-48.

jewelry—chains, earrings, brooches. A boorish workman hunches over to distribute the gold into pails. Behind him four more workmen struggle to carry the model of the calf. Their bodies arch back and the stressed musculature of their forearms and legs imply the heavy weight of their burden. Headed by a woman swathed in a blue gown, a swarming procession of Hebrews carrying platters of additional gold follows the massive idol. Groups of women under a makeshift canopy remove their earrings, feed a baby, and huddle together in discussion while a pair in the lower left also strip themselves of their finery. In a field in the distance men relax on the grass as a woman holds a child to her breast.

In composing the scene, Tintoretto stresses the sense of a tightly knit community. Though the pageant of blasphemous Hebrews snakes back around the foot of the mountain, it is the almost claustrophobic presence of a few figures at the very foreground and the precise choreography of their actions and reactions that articulates the sense of a crowd. The sloping bodies of the women who remove their gold earrings at the left and the angled figures of the men at the right funnel the action toward the front and center. The raking angle of the direction of the procession, emphasized further by the diagonal placement of the women removing their jewelry on the hillside, intensifies the forward thrust of the cavalcade of Hebrews. As we have already seen, the Brescian artists of a generation earlier were presenting Exodus scenes of the desert stories in this manner: bringing several figures to the very edge of the foreground to give the sense of a large mass. However, this representation of the group is most similar to Jacopo Bassano's journey pictures of the 1560s and 70s. As in the Dresden and Madrid *Journey to the Promised Land* paintings (fig. 109) there is a dense portrayal of a few figures at the very foreground with a procession of

Hebrews winding into the background. But while the action at the foreground of Jacopo Bassano's pictures appears frieze-like, running parallel to the picture plane before leading away into the distance, at the *Madonna dell'Orto* the procession presses forward toward the viewer. The precarious, tilted posture of the woman at the left and the pointing gesture of Aaron suggest further that the figures are approaching the real space of the chapel.

Like his Veneto predecessors and contemporaries, Tintoretto also integrated genre detail into the visual narrative. His presentation of a broad cross-section of society—men, women, children, young and old—underlines the sense of the everyday while the inclusion of gold earrings made a connection to a particularly Venetian understanding of the everyday, a point to be discussed at length in the next section. More pertinent here, however, is the new sophistication of narrative rendering displayed in the use of genre elements, especially when compared with earlier images. For example, the last chapter spoke of the genre “pockets” that break up the narrative in the Washington *Adoration of the Golden Calf* (fig. 188). At the *Madonna dell'Orto* the genre scenes not only add interest but help to hold the composition together. This is particularly evident in the very background of the painting where a group of Hebrews rests on the grass. Above them a woman leans over in an arch as she holds a child to her breast. While this detail adds interest to the scene and depth to the setting, it also helps to reinforce the cohesiveness of the group. The rounded back of the woman forms a visual bridge to the procession at the foreground, preventing the background vignette from existing independently from the main narrative events. In the choreography of the smallest details, Tintoretto created a dense and compact narrative that, as we will see, rendered its meaning that much more potent.

A Composition of Contrast

The painting is set up as a composition in two opposing halves. The story of the Hebrews, presented in the bottom half, is a generally dark space exhibiting the slow procession of the idol. The dark clouds hovering low on the mountainside and the canopy above the women contain the narrative within its designated section. The weight of the calf and the gold, forcing the men to strain, anchor the scene at the base of the composition. By contrast, the upper half of the painting is a riot of light and rapture. Here the clouds do not enclose but form a foundation from which the body of Moses surges effortlessly upward. While the lower half is all heaviness and burden, the upper portion with its angels tumbling gracefully from the heavens is a place where gravity is no obstacle.

By giving each story equal status in the overall composition, Tintoretto is totally original in his conception of a vivid contrast of narratives in the *Moses at Mount Sinai and the Blasphemy of the Hebrews*. The earlier examples from central Italy concentrated exclusively on the story of Moses. At the Sistine Chapel, Rosselli places the worship of the golden calf within a broader narrative sequence about Moses: the reception of the Law on Mount Sinai; the worship of the idol; the anger of Moses; the revenge of the Levites; and the renewal of the Law (fig. 92). At the Vatican Logge the reception of the Law is an independent scene while the *Worship of the Golden Calf* is portrayed simultaneously with Moses' anger at the Hebrews dancing around the idol (fig. 171). By contrast, Tintoretto's earlier versions focused solely on the story of the Hebrews. This is evident both in the *cassone* paintings in Vienna and Turin (figs. 183 and 184) where Moses does not feature at all and in the

Washington painting where the figure of the prophet located high on the hilltop is practically lost in the overwhelming portrayal of the Israelite camp. At the Madonna dell'Orto, however, Tintoretto lends equal weight to both scenes. The clouds bisect the enormous painting, setting up a purposeful contrast between Hebrews below and Moses above.

We have already encountered this comparative device in the work of Jacopo Bassano. In the *Miracle of the Quails* (fig. 108) the artist made a compositional distinction between the Hebrews and Moses, creating a tension by the space that divides them. In the *Journey to the Promised Land* (fig. 109) the contrast between Moses and the Hebrews functions most like the Madonna dell'Orto image. More compact in size than Tintoretto's painting and horizontal rather than vertical in format, Jacopo Bassano's work distinguishes between fore- and backgrounds rather than top and bottom. At the fore the Israelites along with the animals of the camp crawl across the ground engrossed in their efforts to collect the water from the rock. Like Tintoretto's figures carrying the idol, even those who stand in Bassano's painting are not fully upright, such as the man who carries a heavy barrel. These figures are weighed down to the earth by human cares and material objects. Heading away from this group, however, is a small troupe led by Moses. As they travel, their bodies rise in an upward slope following the direction of Moses' raised hand toward the sunshine on the horizon. They set their sights on the immaterial, on the light. Bernard Aikema has discussed this and other similar works by Jacopo Bassano as presenting a deliberate antithetical structure: the inertia of the Hebrews at the

foreground versus the way forward—the way of the spirit—leading away into the background.¹¹

Tintoretto, a contemporary of Jacopo Bassano, used this same comparative structure in his *Madonna dell'Orto* painting. In making the contrast so distinct, the artist poses a question to the viewer: in the journey of life, which direction shall you choose? Shall you choose the earthbound path of the Hebrews carrying the idol or the way of Moses that leads to God? Though the scene is Old Testament, the challenge at its heart is ultimately Christian: *quo vadis?*

The question that the painting embraces is, of course, rhetorical. With the *Last Judgement* located opposite, it is clear that to make the wrong choice in one's life journey would ultimately mean the difference between damnation and salvation.¹²

Scholars have comprehensively drawn out the Counter Reform elements of this interpretation of the subject.¹³ As we have already discussed with regard to the *scuole del sacramento* and their reassertion of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, the sixteenth century was a period of challenge to the Catholic faith. In the Church's view, it was a grave sin—one that would be called to account at the Last Judgement—to make an error of faith as the Hebrews did.

Nevertheless, the pairing of the story of the golden calf in conjunction with the Last Judgement was unusual. A more traditional typology would depict Moses' anger at the worship of the idol opposite Christ's expulsion of the merchants from the

¹¹ Aikema, *Bassano* 94.

¹² There appears to be no precedent for the pairing of the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews and Moses at Mount Sinai* and the *Last Judgement*. The only similar program is a portable altar by El Greco with the *Last Judgement* on the front and a scene at Mount Sinai on the reverse. Douglas-Scott, "Art Patronage" 249.

¹³ Pallucchini, "Considerazioni" 55. Niero, "Riforma cattolica" 81-82. Niero, "Riflessioni" 157-59. These reflect, also, on the influence of the particular Counter Reform interests of Gasparo Contarini

temple. For example, Antonio Vassilacchi (1556-1629), called Aliense, painted this straightforward pair of subjects for San Pietro in Perugia (1594; fig. 102), expressing the sinfulness of valuing gold over the spirit and the punishment that this would incur.¹⁴ Acting in the standard typological pattern, the Old and the New Testament stories mimic each other in theme in order to provide historical precedent for the Christian narrative and, ultimately, to reinforce a doctrine of the Church. The lateral paintings at the Madonna dell'Orto, however, do not function in this way. Rather, the painting at the left poses a question that is resolved at the right. It demonstrates how free will—one's actions rather than one's faith alone—will be the basis upon which judgement will be served. This program was challenging and clearly left some viewer's struggling to make sense of it. Vasari himself fell back on the standard trope when he described the painting in the *Lives* as depicting Moses returning from Mount Sinai and finding the people worshipping the golden calf.¹⁵ To Vasari at least the more logical pairing would have been Exodus 32: 19 opposite the *Last Judgement*.

Perhaps, though, Vasari failed to recognize the subject of the painting because the challenge that it presented was aimed more specifically at the local Venetian. There has already been some effort to read the chapel's left lateral painting within the more specific situation of Venice and even the parish of the Madonna dell'Orto, most notably by Michael Douglas-Scott in his unpublished doctoral thesis. Douglas-Scott, focusing on issues of patronage, argues that under the guiding force of the Secular Canons of San Giorgio in Alga Tintoretto's grand decorative program was intended to

(1483-1542), a prominent figure both in the early years of Catholic reform and in Venice in particular. His monument is located in the Contarini family chapel at the Madonna dell'Orto.

¹⁴ Aikema, *Bassano* 160.

¹⁵ "Nella chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Orto...ha dipinto il Tintoretto le due facciate, cioè a olio sopra tele, della capella maggiore, alte dalla volta insino alla cornice del sedere braccia ventidue. In quella che è a

reassert the devotional heart of the church to the main chapel. This would, in turn, have emphasized the Tridentine concern with collective worship, and by implication, collective redemption.¹⁶ Thus universal concerns of the Catholic Reform and local concerns of the parish mingled in the painting's theme.

Conclusion

This section has shown that Tintoretto's program of paintings in the main chapel of the Madonna dell'Orto was deeply rooted in Veneto tradition yet at the same time it presented something new. By emphasizing the importance of the group and through the subtle integration of genre detail, the artist betrays the very specifically Venetian artistic heritage that he has inherited and within which he works. By presenting the painting as a composition in two parts—a rhetorical contrast of two diverging paths of life—this work demonstrates the new Venetian milieu and the new religious climate within which he functions. Following the lead of Michael Douglas-Scott, the remainder of this chapter will consider in greater detail how the integral question at the heart of Tintoretto's *Moses at Mount Sinai and the Blasphemy of the Hebrews* is posed to a particularly Venetian audience.¹⁷

man destra ha fatto Moisè, il quale tornando dal monte, dove da Dio aveva avuta la legge, trova il popolo che adora il vitel d'oro." Vasari, *Lives* 6: 590-91.

¹⁶ The Canons aim would have been to shift lay focus away from the shrine of the Madonna dell'Orto. Douglas-Scott, "Art Patronage" 249, 270, 280-81, 291.

¹⁷ Douglas-Scott's thesis approaches Tintoretto's main chapel program within the broader question of the art patronage of the Secular Canons of San Giorgio in Alga at the Madonna dell'Orto and their plan to create a more coherent iconographical program for the church. However, in his discussion of the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* he notes that the wider issues of blasphemy and idolatry implied in the painting deserve a detailed study. Douglas-Scott, "Art Patronage" 271-72.

The *Blasphemy of the Hebrews*

In order to illustrate most forcefully the sins that could lead one astray from God's path, Tintoretto painted the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* in a manner that would have had the most impact on the local Venetian. He did this in three ways: by portraying the carrying of the calf in the guise of civic ritual; by tarnishing the understanding of gold; and by emphasizing the golden earrings. In so doing, he conflated details of everyday Venetian life with the image of the Jew of the neighboring Ghetto, calling upon the contemporary fears and anxieties that underlay that relationship. Ultimately, Tintoretto refers to a specifically Venetian conflict about choosing the right path in order to underline a more general Catholic teaching.

The Procession of the Idol and Contemporary Civic Ritual

After the gold is collected and the idol is prepared, Aaron calls for "a feast in Yahweh's [the calf's] honor" (Exod. 32: 5). This aspect of the Biblical story is played up in the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews*. The snaking pageant, the procession of the devotional object and the women dressed in their finest overlooking the event: these details illustrate what Ridolfi described as an occasion of "solemn pomp".¹⁸ Indeed, these elements would have been recognizable to the sixteenth-century Venetian as part and parcel of his civic experience, revolving around the regular festivals that took place in the Piazza San Marco.

Presenting the golden calf carried on a platform in a procession was an unusual thing for Tintoretto to do. In earlier versions of the subject either in central Italy or by Tintoretto himself, the calf is portrayed fully formed on top of a pedestal or

¹⁸ "...L'Idolo del Vitel d'oro...portato dagli Hebrei con solenne pompa." Ridolfi, *Vite* 16.

a raised altar. Until now there has been no explanation for Tintoretto's deviation from tradition. However, this detail could have just as likely stemmed from Venetian everyday life as from the annals of artistic convention. In fact, the carrying of large wooden platforms, or *soleri* as they were known, was a typical part of a very familiar part of Venetian life: the processional ritual.¹⁹ Marin Sanuto recounts numerous festive occasions when groups of men would convey the *soleri* around the Piazza San Marco.²⁰ Upon these raised platforms were displayed devotional objects and figurative scenes enacting Biblical stories or animated emblems and metaphors. In some instances the *soleri* were quite simply piled high with gold and silver. These primitive parade floats were often sponsored by the *scuole grandi*, the bulwarks of Venetian middle class society.²¹ A print of a Corpus Christi procession published in 1610 by Giacomo Franco (1550-1620) demonstrates how the *scuola* brothers, dressed in their habits, carried the *soleri* (fig. 125). Each platform laden with its display required several men to maneuver it. Even so, Franco depicts the men leaning back under the weight of the displays as they edge their way around the Piazza. Jost Amman's woodprint (1565; fig. 104) indicates more precisely the difficulty of the task as a group carries a scene of the doge before the Madonna and Child. Like the men hauling the golden calf, the men in the ducal procession strain under the weight of the float, the muscles in their legs flexing under the pressure. A group of men

¹⁹ Venice put on elaborate civic rituals in the Piazza at least once every five days. For a detailed account of the frequency and types of rituals, see Muir, *Civic Ritual* 212-23.

²⁰ For descriptions of the *soleri* used in various processions, see Marin Sanuto, *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, eds. Nicolò Barozzi, Guglielmo Berchet, Rinaldo Fulin and Federico Stefani (Venice, 1879-1902) 2: 547-548, 14: 305-307, 16: 303-304, 18: 271, 20: 274-275, 24: 347-48, 25: 437, 30: 281, 34: 238-239, 36: 369, 39: 77-78, 41: 413-414, 50: 374, 56: 285-286. See also ASV, *Ceremoniali Registri* 1, 60r (ASV, *Ceremoniali Registri* 2, 40v-41r).

²¹ For the *scuole grandi* and floats displaying Old Testament subjects, see Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State to 1620* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 53-54. See also Chapter 5.

processing a wooden platform mounted by a precarious devotional object and a pile of gold would have been a familiar sight to the sixteenth-century Venetian.

In addition, to the unusual detail of the carrying of the calf, Tintoretto also breaks with tradition in his conception of the role of women in the narrative. Although women always formed part of the conventional image of the golden calf story, they were usually portrayed dancing around the idol. Tintoretto, however, uses female figures as the backdrop to the procession. As if on a balcony, these ladies of the camp are seated at the perfect vantage point for the parade of the idol. They wear colorful gowns, gold earrings and, at the center, a pointed hat with a flowing diaphanous scarf. At their feet, old sheets hang loosely over the edge of the terrace. Again, this sight was part of the typical Venetian civic ritual in the Piazza. Sanuto remarks on the presence of women looking down on Corpus Christi pageants from the windows of the Procuratie Vecchie on the north side of the Piazza.²² Gentile Bellini's *Procession in the Piazza San Marco* (Accademia, Venice; 1496; fig. 113) demonstrates the way that this functioned.²³ As the solemn procession of the relic of the True Cross marches slowly through the square, the well-dressed women in the windows above help to form a backdrop of splendor for the event. The richly colored tapestries hanging from the sills add to the total effect. At the Madonna dell'Orto, the women on the hillside above the trailing sheets, like the women above the tapestries who view the Piazza at the Corpus Christi festivals, were part of the adornments, part of the solemn pomp, of the occasion.²⁴ Just by being there they played an integral role in the ritual.

²² Sanuto, *I diarii* 14: 305-06; 45: 355-56.

²³ For Gentile's *Procession* as a visual document of Venetian civic ritual, see Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting* 144-50.

²⁴ The sheets hanging over the hill terrace have also been interpreted as washing hung out to dry, a reference to Exod. 19: 10. Niero, "Riflessioni" 158. However, given that the sheets are draped over a dusty hill, it is unlikely that they have been freshly washed. In the view of this thesis, the detail of

Above all, it is this act of community—of each individual contributing in some way to a common purpose—that distinguishes Tintoretto's painting as particularly Venetian. The Hebrews ask for a godhead, Aaron instructed what must be done and now, as the painting portrays, they work together to construct and to revere their idol. Each person participates: one gathers the gold; others carry the model; or, like the women and the draperies on the hill terrace, they lend the correct air of solemnity and splendor to the occasion. Again, the processions in the Piazza manifested this sense of communal action. These ceremonies, played out mainly by the *scuole*, were meant to glorify God and purge sins on behalf of the whole city. The paintings of the later years of the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century by Gentile Bellini, Mansueti, Carpaccio and others chronicled in visual language this sense of collectivity. The *Procession in the Piazza San Marco* serves as a case in point again. Figures take part in the actual procession by supporting the sacred object and its canopy. Others sing or stand as witnesses, participating by their very cooperation with the event. The success of the procession of the True Cross—like the construction of the golden calf—is born out of the participation—active or compliant—of each individual acting his part in a whole.

In essence, Tintoretto interprets the perversity of Aaron's proposal for a feast to honor Yahweh as a caricature of the civic rituals of Venice. Just as in Jacopo Bassano's journey images, in the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* the inclusion of details that resonated with contemporary life was not simply to add charm to the picture but

washing clothes presented in Exod. 19 will come into play with reference to Tintoretto's *Miracle of the Manna* in San Giorgio Maggiore. See Chapter 6.

to add impact and significance to the narrative.²⁵ By evoking the festivals that occurred with frequency in the Piazza, Tintoretto brought the Biblical narrative profoundly into parallel with everyday Venetian experience. As the procession moves forward, suggesting contiguity between pictorial and real space, the question implied in the painting—*quo vadis?*—assumes greater urgency.

Gold in the Venetian Context

The *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* was not simply an illustration of a historical narrative: it brought Scripture to life through the inclusion of details from contemporary Venetian experience. Having established this, it must be emphasized that in no way may this image be mistaken for a critique of the deeply Catholic, Venetian way of life. Tintoretto did not parody civic ritual to undermine it. Rather, by manipulating recognizable elements from everyday life, he demonstrated how something that was essentially good could be distorted to become something evil. Free will, a fundamental concept in the Counter Reform reassertion of Catholic teaching, governs this distinction between good and evil. The implications of free will in the painting will be discussed later on. At this point, however, the focus continues to be on Tintoretto's exploitation of the elements of Venetian experience, especially the presentation of gold.

In Renaissance Venice gold was good. Like so many other *scuole* paintings of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Gentile's *Procession* emphasizes a conspicuous display of gold and wealth. The True Cross reliquary shines brilliantly of

²⁵ Aikema, *Bassano* 59. For more on the moralizing tone of Bassano's religious images, see W.R. Rearick, "Jacopo Bassano and Changing Religious Imagery in the Mid-Cinquecento," *Essays*

gold filigree below the delicate crimson canopy. The edifices at the sides of the Piazza exhibit the cold elegance of marble and colored stone with rich tapestries and elegant women adorning some of the upper balconies. The culmination of splendor, the diamond in the crown, is, of course, the imposing façade of San Marco. Shimmering with mosaics, the church rises in Byzantine magnificence threatening to overwhelm the narrative at the foreground. All of these details taken together render a glittering gem-like painted surface.

However, the gold of Gentile's *Procession* is distinguished not only by its accumulation but also by the precision of its ordering. The spoils of the Fourth Crusade, fragments of wealth taken from lands afar, are refashioned into an assemblage, a glorious visual statement symbolically charged with Venetian power and ambition. Displayed so prominently on the edifice of San Marco, the mosaic narrative in the tympana flaunting the *translatio* of Saint Mark, a calculated exposition of political rhetoric, asserts this explicitly.²⁶ By extension, the meticulous articulation of the ceremonies that took place in the Piazza gave visual form to the social order of Venice. These controlled displays of wealth, great floats piled high with silver and gold offered to the glory of God, were a means of equating civic and divine order.²⁷

By contrast, the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* illustrates a world out of balance, where gold is accumulated but presented in chaos. While Gentile represented the

Presented to Myron P. Gilmore, vol. 2, eds. Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978) 331-42.

²⁶ Elizabeth Rodini addresses the density of wealth portrayed by Gentile and suggests that the painting unfolds a "discourse of material appropriation that is recognizable as essential to Venetian self-fashioning in the period of the early Renaissance." Elizabeth Rodini, "Describing Narrative in Gentile Bellini's *Procession in Piazza San Marco*," *Art History* 21 (1998): 40.

²⁷ Muir, *Civic Ritual* 227. Deborah Howard, "Ritual Space in Renaissance Venice," *Scroope* 5 (1993-4): 4.

façade of San Marco as a stoic backdrop, Tintoretto pictures a world where glistening trinkets are dumped in a vulgar pile at the foreground. Rather than the fifteenth century graceful and disciplined procession of display, there is a chaotic thrust of humanity presenting every gaudy piece of jewelry in their possession. And instead of a delicately filigreed reliquary as the focal point to the narrative, the sixteenth-century cavalcade is headed by an unwieldy idol of an emaciated cow. Here gold, divorced from the order of the true God, is rendered disorderly: worthless, offensive and even blasphemous.

The piles of gold allude to a very specific kind of disorder, one that was also distinctly Venetian. It is the contention here that the hunching oaf with the contorted face, mindlessly shoveling golden trinkets into pails would have been associated by the Venetian viewer with the contemporary Jew, the despised neighbor of the Madonna dell'Orto parish. The evidence for this link between ancient Hebrew and sixteenth-century Jew—the semiotic relationship between the painting's *gettare* (the act of casting with metal) and the Ghetto (the ancient forgery) of Venice—is found precisely in the sign of the gold hoop earring.

The Gold Hoop Earrings

Though the gold piled beneath the calf and at Aaron's feet are heaps of generic baubles, two specific scenes of the removal of earrings frame the event. On the left a woman leans over so that another, her back turned, may help her to unclasp her earrings. On the right under the canopy on the hillside, a young girl sits quietly as a woman gently releases the jewels from her ears. These actions are a direct reference to the Scriptural text (Exod. 32: 3).

The emphasis on gold earrings is in itself not unique in the history of Italian Renaissance art.²⁸ Printed Bible illustrations often portray the gold earrings that provided the raw material for the idol. For example, the illustration accompanying Exodus 32 in the Giunta 1507 Bible depicts Aaron and the Hebrews holding up earrings above a calf on an altar (fig. 41). In the Bevilacqua 1576 edition of the Bible (its sources predating the main chapel program at the Madonna dell'Orto), Aaron accepts chains of gold at the left while a group of women with a child on the right remove their jewels (fig. 69). Indeed, Tintoretto himself included this detail in the Turin *cassone* painting discussed in the previous chapter (fig. 184). Therefore, it is not the subject that makes the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* unique.

However, the gold hoop earring in the context of Venice, where it was the distinguishing sign of the Jewish woman, was unique. Though the kind of conspicuous display of wealth practiced by the Venetian citizens of Gentile's *Procession* was denied to the Jews, the elaborate costume of women was a limited outlet of exhibition permitted to them. Thomas Coryat, the English pilgrim traveling through Venice in 1608, made several remarks about the Jewish Ghetto including the attire of women: "I saw many Jewish women, wherof some were as beautiful as ever I saw, and so gorgeous in their apparel, jewels, chaines of gold, and rings adorned with precious stones."²⁹ These lavish ensembles included traditionally the gold hoop earring.

²⁸ It has been argued that the removal of earrings is unique and finds its source in the Brucioli Bible, a contemporary vernacular translation, which stresses the action of the removal of the earrings by the Hebrew women. Knöpfel, "Sui dipinti" 150-51. This thesis has recently been disputed. See Douglas-Scott, "Art Patronage" 269.

²⁹ Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, vol. 1 (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1905) 372. See also Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550-1670* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) 159.

The earring was not an insignificant bauble but rather a potent brand. In Renaissance Venice, components of dress defined a person socially.³⁰ In particular, clothing and other physical adornments were visible mechanisms for creating and maintaining ethnic boundaries.³¹ From 1215 when Innocent III called the Fourth Lateran Council, Jews were forced to distinguish themselves by a marking on their dress. In 1394 the Venetian government legislated that all Jews must wear a yellow circle. Yellow, because of its association with prostitutes who wore scarves of that color, was in itself a degrading distinction.³² In 1496 the distinguishing habit was changed to a yellow cap (commonly referred to as the *Judenhut* in northern countries) to make the Jew more visible in public.³³ Although legislation regarding yellow lapel badges and caps appears to have been aimed mainly at men, Diane Owen Hughes has traced a history of the golden circle in a woman's ear as an equally degrading mark of distinction in Renaissance Italy.³⁴ As Hughes notes, the Franciscan traveling preacher

³⁰ For a discussion of the decorum of jewelry and cosmetics in the period, see Mary Rogers, "The Decorum of Women's Beauty: Trissino, Firenzuola, Luigini and the Representation of Women in Sixteenth-Century Painting," *Renaissance Studies* 2 (1988): 47-88. For a general introduction to the ways in which components of dress work via semiotics, see Joanne B. Eicher, introduction, *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time*, ed. by Eicher (Oxford: Berg, 1995) 1.

³¹ For the use of dress as a boundary of ethnicity in the general social sense, see Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1989) 10-12.

³² Benjamin Ravid, "From Yellow to Red: On the Distinguishing Head-Covering of the Jews of Venice," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 182. Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London: Faber, 1994) 240.

³³ By the early seventeenth century it appears that only Levantine Jews wore the yellow hat or turban while all other Jews took to wearing red hats. It is unclear why or how this change took place. See Ravid, "Yellow to Red" 187.

³⁴ Diane Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 22-24. See also Sennett, *Flesh and Stone* 240. For more on the difficulty of tracing sources for the legislation of distinguishing markers for women in the Italian Renaissance city-states, see Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs" 21-22. In 1443 the Venetian Senate enforced that Jewish women as well as men were required to wear a distinguishing sign but it did not specify the marker. Ravid, "Yellow to Red" 183. Robert Bonfil has suggested that earrings were denied to the Jews in the sixteenth century because Christian women of the nobility took to wearing them. Unfortunately, he does not qualify this point with a source. Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994) 107.

Giacomo della Marca said, “Jewish women wear them [gold hoop earrings] in place of circumcision.”³⁵

The gold earring that plays a pivotal role in Exodus 32 was also part of living Venetian experience, especially the experience of living next door to the Ghetto. By incorporating prominently this detail into the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews*, Tintoretto is, on the one hand, especially faithful to Scripture but he also creates, in conjunction with the manipulation of civic ritual and of gold, an image that would resonate most powerfully in its context. It is a Venetian world upside down.³⁶ For the Venetian viewer, this vision must have tapped into fears and suspicions of the neighboring Jewish community.

The Ghetto and the Anxiety of Order

The image of the Jew mixed up with manipulated images of Venetian civic life and livelihood in the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* recalled the rather unsatisfactory—to sixteenth-century eyes—situation that existed next to the Madonna dell’Orto parish: the Ghetto. In order to understand fully the anxieties of secular life—the moral tug of war—that Tintoretto’s painting calls upon, it is necessary to review the changing Venetian attitudes to the Ghetto and the inherent impracticalities of such an institution.

Throughout Christian Europe, the visage of the Jew represented a history of anxieties of a world out of order. Their refusal to accept the revelation of Christ was a constant frustration to the mission of the Church, yet because they were unbaptized

³⁵ Hughes, “Distinguishing Signs” 24.

they could not be considered as heretics. As a result, Jews were allowed to remain in European communities as a *testimonium veritatis*, their sad and segregated existence proof of the error of their ways, their denial of Christ. In Venice this was achieved for many years by banning Jews from residence in the city proper. They had been granted the privilege of moneylending and selling second-hand goods (*strazzaria*) in the lagoon during the day but had to return to their homes on the mainland each evening. With the exception of a brief stay in the fourteenth century, Jews had no permanent residence on the Venetian islands.³⁷ By regulating the movements and activities of the Jews, the Venetians were able to strike a balance between economic advantage and religious principle.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, however, this working relationship was strained. The War with the League of Cambrai forced Jewish refugees from the mainland to pour into Venice. Suddenly Jews were in the city continuously, living dispersed among and in close proximity to the Christian citizenry. In an effort to reinstate social order, Venice established in 1516 the first ghetto of Europe.³⁸ The Ghetto was meant as an effective update on the balance that existed before the war:

³⁶ Gold hoop earrings are, in fact, associated with damnation in another earlier Venetian image: in a segment of the eleventh-twelfth century *Last Judgement* at Santa Maria Assunta on Torcello (fig. 23), heads wearing prominent hoop earrings burn in hell.

³⁷ There remains considerable uncertainty regarding the earliest history of the Jews in Venice. Sansovino takes the name of the island of Giudecca as a reference to early Jewish residents. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 368. More recent research, however, has disproved this claim. Benjamin Ravid, "The Religious, Economic and Social Background and Context of the Establishment of the Ghetti of Venice," *Gli Ebrei e Venezia seconli xiv-xviii*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1987) 213. Riccardo Calimani, *The Ghetto of Venice*, trans. Katherine Silberblatt Wolfthal (New York: M. Evans, 1987) 2. Sandra Debenedetti Stow, "The Etymology of 'Ghetto': New Evidence from Rome," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 79-85.

³⁸ The term "ghetto" refers, of course, to the forge that stood on the area before the settlement of the Jews. Ravid, "Establishment of the Ghetti" 218-219 and 244-247. The first use of the term "ghetto" in a papal document dates to the bull *Cum Nimis Absurdum* of Paul IV in 1555. Use of "ghetto" became generalized by the end of the sixteenth century. Benjamin Ravid, "From Geographical Realia to Historical Symbol: The Odyssey of the Word Ghetto," *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David Ruderman (New York: 1992) 373-85. See also Anna Foa,

though the Jews resided in the city, they were separated physically from the Christian citizenry.

Some scholars suggest that the formation of the Ghetto emerged from fundamentalist fear of God's wrath. Venetians such as the diarist Girolamo Priuli and some fringe members of government read Venice's losing battle with the League of Cambrai as apocalyptic and believed that the segregation of the Jews would placate God.³⁹ However, a moderate perspective reveals that the establishment of the Ghetto was one in a series of actions aimed at inhibiting integration between Jews and Christians: it was more about classification than the fanaticism of the moment.⁴⁰ Set on the outskirts of the city, on the border of the Madonna dell'Orto parish, the Ghetto was a more explicit form of the segregation and the social ordering already legislated through the distinguishing signs of the yellow caps and gold earrings.⁴¹ By exaggerating differences between Christian and Jew, the Ghetto attempted to create a clear and visible social order: who is in and who is out.⁴²

However, as much as the Ghetto reestablished the hierarchy between Christian and Jew, it also paved the way for a more ambiguous relationship between the two.

The Jews of Europe after the Black Death, trans. Andrea Grover (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000) 139. For a general account of the history of the Ghetto, see Calimani, *Ghetto*.

³⁹ Robert Finlay, "The Foundation of the Ghetto: Venice, the Jews, and the War of the League of Cambrai," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 126 (1982): 140-154. Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, "Venice between Jerusalem, Byzantium, and Divine Retribution: The Origins of the Ghetto," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 163-79. See also Sennett, *Flesh and Stone* 237.

⁴⁰ In the key anthropological text on this kind of classification, Mary Douglas notes that an act of separating or demarcating in society is a standard "pollution behavior" or a "reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications." Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966) 36, 160. See also Pullan, *Jews of Europe* 153.

⁴¹ Legislation regarding the yellow cap was reconfirmed repeatedly throughout the sixteenth century. See Ravid, "Yellow to Red" 184-87. Other regulations on the movements of the Jews with relation to the Christian majority included curfews. See Benjamin Ravid, "Curfew Time in the Ghetto of Venice," *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, eds. Ellen E. Kittell and Thomas F. Madden (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1999) 237-75.

⁴² For more on the Ghetto as "prophylactic space," see Sennett, *Flesh and Stone* 227-28.

Most importantly, though the Ghetto segregated Jews, it also for the first time sanctioned their permanent presence in the city. Their presence was now both legal and protected. Indeed, there is a paradox inherent in the foundation of any segregated community: while ostracizing the minority reinforces the identity of the majority, it also has the potential of reinforcing the group identity of the minority. In establishing social boundaries, the objective of the Ghetto was to re-forge the purity and the unity of experience of the Venetian Catholic majority.⁴³ However, it has been suggested that the Ghetto also had an inverse effect: the Jews may have viewed their enclosure in a positive light, as a “Jewish space,” the “concrete realization of the invisible walls of the Talmud had erected to protect and preserve Jewish identity.”⁴⁴ This was the case in the more central and visible segregated communities in Venice, such as the Germans at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi or the Turks at the Fondaco dei Turchi, which were safe havens for the preservation of culture and religion. The Venetians themselves lived in such cloistered communities abroad, such as in Alexandria, where their way of life was protected.⁴⁵ In seeking to strengthen the Catholic-Christian foundations of the city by isolating the Jews, the Venetians supported indirectly the practice of Judaism.

⁴³ The social order imposed by the Ghetto was, of course, less-than-perfect in the view of the Christian majority. The ultimate order would have been the mass conversion of the Jews to Catholicism. However, the Venetian Jewish policy never aimed to convert the Jews in the Ghetto. In this way it is distinguished from the policy in Rome, particularly after 1555 when Paul IV in *Cum Nimis Absurdam* aimed not to segregate but to convert the Jews en masse. Pius IV reissued *Cum Nimis* in 1566 applying it to all states, not just the Papal States. For more on eschatological thought and the advent of a pro-active papal policy on the Jews, see Kenneth R. Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555-1593* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977). Stow’s revision of his early thesis notes that the popes, acting in their temporal role, allowed some leniency to the Jews on economic matters. Kenneth R. Stow, “The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond,” *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 257-79.

⁴⁴ Foa, *Jews of Europe* 142-43, 150. See also, Stow, “Papacy and the Jews” 268 and Sennett, *Flesh and Stone* 216 and 241-44.

⁴⁵ See Ravid, “Establishment of the Ghetti” 230.

Moreover, the Ghetto was proving in many ways to be a false containment, especially when economic pressures were introduced. To begin with, the size of the Ghetto was growing. In 1541 the Ghetto Vecchio was established, sanctioning residence to foreign Sephardic Jewish merchants who were lured to Venice by tax incentives in the hope of enhancing commerce passing through the city.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the original Ghetto Nuovo, when opened during the day, was a crossroads of human traffic as diverse in ethnicity and religion as the wider city of Venice. Though resident Christian poor were drawn there mainly because it was the center of the pawn broking industry, beyond the Ghetto walls, the second-hand peddlers were increasingly roaming the city streets plying their trade.⁴⁷ As Patricia Allerston points out, “commercial transactions involved people in conversation, as well as transfers of money and goods.”⁴⁸ Though in theory the Ghetto denied integration between the Jewish and Christian communities, in fact it brought the two communities economically—and therefore socially—closer than ever before.

⁴⁶ The names of the Ghetto Nuovo, established 1516, and the Ghetto Vecchio, established 1541, relate to the designations of the original forges and not to the foundation dates of the Jewish residences. While living in the Ghetto Vecchio under two-year contracts, the Sephardim were restricted to commerce as their only source of livelihood. See Benjamin Ravid, “A Tale of Three Cities and the *Raison d’Etat*: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 139. For more on the Ghetto Vecchio, see Ravid, “Establishment of the Ghetti” 222-26. For the legal position of the Sephardic community in contrast to the older community of the Ashkenazim, see Renata Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographical Survey,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 112-137. For the position of the Sephardim merchants relative to Venetian trade in the 1580s, see Brian Pullan, “Jewish Moneylending in Venice: From Private Enterprise to Public Service,” in Cozzi, *Gli Ebrei* 679 and Ravid, “Tale of Three Cities” 155.

⁴⁷ By the 1590s “an elite of second-hand dealers appears to have replaced the older elite of bankers in the Ghetto,” indicating that there were increasingly numbers of Jews working beyond the Ghetto walls and on the streets of Christian Venice. Brian Pullan, “Jewish Moneylending” 674.

⁴⁸ Patricia Allerston, “‘Come un castello’? The Ghetto Nuovo in Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Venice,” European Social Science History Conference, Amsterdam, 2000. I am grateful to Patricia Allerston for allowing me to read the unpublished transcript of her presentation. See also, Allerston, “Reconstructing the Second-Hand Clothes Trade in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Venice,” *Costume* 33 (1999): 49. Cf. Bonfil, *Jewish Life* 72.

Far from creating order, the establishment of the Ghetto fostered reason for anxiety of disorder in the Venetian community. An extreme of this paranoia was the fear in the region around the Ghetto of judaizing, Judaism practiced covertly beyond its proper boundaries.⁴⁹ In combining the signs of Venetian Christian life with those of Judaism, both ancient and contemporary, the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* picks up on a sense of boundaries being blurred. Mired in idolatrous gold, the Hebrews in the painting reflect the Venetian conflict in balancing financial and social affairs with matters of faith.

Conflict in the 1550s-60s

It was, in fact, timely for Tintoretto to paint an image that evoked the social disorder and distress of the Ghetto. The image of the Jews was in many ways a reminder of much of the religious and civic discontent that engulfed Italy as a whole and Venice in particular in the early 1560s. Though anti-Semitism had been a feature of Italian societies for hundreds of years, it was the middle of the sixteenth century, with the advent of the Counter Reformation and the growing concern over stamping out errors of faith, which witnessed a peak of religious intolerance and more aggressive civic response.

The civic relationship with the Hebrew publishing agents is a case in point. Sparked by a rivalry between two Hebrew printers, the Inquisition intervened in 1553 to investigate the works they published, specifically the Talmud, the rabbinical

⁴⁹ For more on anxiety over judaizing, see Pullan, *Jews of Europe* 101.

discourses.⁵⁰ The *Esecutori contro la bestemmia* determined that the Talmud was an extreme source of blasphemy, a corruption of the Law of Moses. The Council of Ten in concert with the Chief Inquisitor, Cardinal Carafa (the future Pope Paul IV, who would be notorious for his anti-Semitic policies), ordered the Talmud to be burned in Piazza San Marco.⁵¹ Venetian compliance with the Inquisition's charge signaled the end of Hebrew printing in the city, the emigration of a sizable sector of the publishing industry and the loss of revenue from taxes levied on materials associated with the book trade. Paul Grendler notes that, as a symbol of Venetian concerns of disorder, this action indicates a willingness to make extreme economic sacrifices for the sake of the fortification of the Catholic faith.⁵²

Economic self-interest, however, often tempered religious scruples. Part of the threat that the resident Jews posed to the Venetians was located in the city's own inability to deal decisively with them and the guilt that this inspired.⁵³ The 1553 burning of the Talmud in the Piazza was, in fact, one extreme moment in a series of bitter clashes and shrewd concessions. If we look to the publishing industry again, by 1564-65 the State permitted Hebrew printing to resume in Venice minus the Talmud and under government censor. However, this was followed less than a decade later by

⁵⁰ A Hebrew press was established in Venice in 1516 under Daniel Bomberg, who printed the complete Talmud in 1519-23. Paul F. Grendler, "The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 103.

⁵¹ The Talmud had been burned in Italy as early as 1415 but this instance was meant to instigate conversion. K.R. Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553 in the Light of Sixteenth-Century Catholic Attitudes toward the Talmud," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* 34 (1972): 436.

⁵² Paul Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 93.

⁵³ For the Venetian government's ambiguity over the status of the Jews prior to 1528 and the succeeding years of bargaining over charter renewals, see Benjamin Ravid, "The Socio-Economic Background of the Expulsion and Readmission of the Venetian Jews, 1571-1573," *Essays in Modern Jewish History: A Tribute to Ben Halpern*, eds. Frances Malino and Phyllis Cohen Albert (East Brunswick: AUP, 1982) 27-55.

another state-sanctioned bonfire of Hebrew books in September 1568.⁵⁴ While the outline is simplistic, it demonstrates that in the decade surrounding the painting of the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* Venice was struggling between striking down the internal enemy to maintain moral integrity—constantly reasserting the boundaries of the Jews—and turning a blind eye to maintain economic advantage.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Tintoretto's *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* encapsulates both visually and thematically all that would instigate an uneasy conscience in the local Venetian. By calling attention to the markers of Venetian stability, continuity and order and then conflating them with the chaos embodied in the nearby Ghetto, the painting brings the choice between true faith and golden idols—between responsibilities of faith and the lure of economics—powerfully into the present reality. The naturalistic rendering of the image, then, is not simply aesthetic in intent but a rhetorical convention that aimed to impact a very particular viewing audience.

Moses at Mount Sinai

The consignment of the tablets of the Law to Moses at the Madonna dell'Orto is unlike any of the paintings of this subject that have been discussed so far. While the

⁵⁴ It is unclear what provoked this instance of book burning and it is unknown whether it was completely carried out or not. Grendler, "Destruction" 110-12, 117-18, n. 50.

⁵⁵ Venice's ambiguous relationship with the Jews can be demonstrated as well with regard to the Jewish loan banks upon which the Christian majority was dependent. There was always the prospect of establishing a Monte di Pietà, an alternative Christian lending association. However, the Monte di Pietà could not be taxed as much as the Jewish banks, they were more restrictive in their lending options and, most importantly, had the potential of developing into powerful financial institutions beyond the direct control of the state. So again religious duty and economic and political needs had to be balanced. Later in 1571 at the height of anti-Semitic policy, the government voted to expel the Jews but reversed the decision in 1573 because of the difficulty in setting up a Monte di Pietà. For more on the Monte di

images in the Vatican, at the Sistine Chapel and at the Logge, and in Venice, at the Ducal Palace and at San Marco, (see Chapter 2) stress the material transfer of the tablets, Tintoretto's painting renders the scene as a spiritual transaction. Four points underline this: the posture of Moses; the nudity of Moses; the athleticism of Moses; and the overall use of light. By drawing on Exodus 34, St Paul's letter to the Corinthians and the church father, Gregory of Nyssa, Tintoretto interpreted the subject in a striking spirit of Catholic reform that has distinct roots in Venice's own eastern heritage.

The Posture of Moses

The postures of both God and Moses are the first signal that Tintoretto has created something new in the history of the depiction of this subject. God the Father descends headfirst out of the clouds of the heavens. Several wingless angels accompanying the Almighty plunge from above, their arched and sinuous bodies suggesting the swiftness of their descent. Two angels support the outstretched arms of God, holding him in an upside-down cruciform position. Seemingly without effort, he holds in his left hand one of the round-topped tablets of the Law while he reaches out his right hand for the second tablet, materializing in the arm of an attending angel. With his head thrown back he looks directly into the face of Moses. Emerging out of cloudy heights of Mount Sinai, the figure of Moses imitates the posture of God. The prophet throws up his arms in an ecstatic orans position. His whole body arches as his head strains back to meet the gaze of the Lord. The apparently narrowing space between the two key protagonists evokes the urgency of this extraordinary meeting.

Tintoretto portrays the encounter between God and Moses at the mountaintop like an emotive greeting. With both of their arms outstretched and the tablets of the Law not fully material, the composition implies that the next action will be the embrace of the two figures. This is entirely contrary to the renditions of the same subject that were discussed in Chapter 2. Rosselli's version at the Sistine Chapel demonstrates the gesture that is common to these other compositions: a meeting based on a material transaction (fig. 92). As in the *Madonna dell'Orto* painting, Moses and the Lord look directly into each others' eyes. However, the two figures remain in their separate spheres. Even as God places the tablets of the Law into the hands of Moses, there is no sense that the two figures might touch. While Rosselli's image suggests a bestowal of the Law from one figure to the next, Tintoretto's image implies a coming together of man and God.⁵⁶

The raising of the arms in prayer is a purposeful imitation of the gesture of Christ on the cross, an action of complete surrender, of total offering of self to and of putting complete faith in the Almighty.⁵⁷ Throughout Exodus the raising of Moses' arms is a sign for the submission of faith in God. At the Red Sea Yahweh commands Moses to raise his staff so that the waters will part (Exod. 14: 16, 21). Later during the battle with the Amalekites, God instructs Moses to raise his hands: for as long as Moses kept his arms raised, the Israelites prevailed against their enemies (Exod. 17:

"Socio-Economic Background" 45.

⁵⁶ Given the history of portraying the face-to-face exchange between God and Moses, the suggestion that the spiritual innovation of Tintoretto's painting stems from Anton Francesco Doni's *I Mondi* (1552), which describes the meeting as "face-to-face," is insufficient. Knöpfel, "Sui dipinti" 151-52. See also Rossi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 107.

⁵⁷ For more on the gesture of Moses as an antetype to that of Christ on the Cross, see Rugolo, "Il simbolismo" 215. See also Meyer Schapiro, *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, *Approaches to Semiotics* 11 (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) 18. Another example of an intimate encounter with God, St Francis is traditionally portrayed in the ecstatic orans posture when he was granted the stigmatization.

11).⁵⁸ The *Glossa Ordinaria* emphasizes the contact with God made through this gesture: “Elevare manus hoc est actus levare ad Deum.”⁵⁹

Gregory of Nyssa, in his *De Vita Moysis*, published in Venice at least once in 1536, explains this allegory in more specific terms: “Moses’ holding his hands aloft signifies the contemplation of the Law with lofty insights; his letting them hang to earth signifies the mean and lowly literal exposition and observance of the Law.” (Book 2, 149)⁶⁰ Arms held high indicates a spiritual attention to the Law of God; arms hung low—like the gormless man stooped over the pile of gold in the lower half of the painting—implies obstinacy to the Law. In the context of Tintoretto’s painting, with its allusions to the Jews of the Ghetto, Gregory’s reading of Exod. 17 resonates especially strongly. His commentary continues: “for the true priesthood, through the word of God joined with it, lifts high again the powers of the Law which fell to earth because of the heaviness of the Jewish understanding.” (Book 2, 150)⁶¹ This hardness of heart—this lack of faith—was, of course, a common accusation made against the Jews in the Renaissance.⁶² The figure of Moses in a rapturous orans pose represents the spiritual awareness that is missing in the visual narrative below.

Maurice Cope has suggested that a new spiritual understanding of Moses in Venice and the Veneto can be traced to the 1520s when, as in Giolfino’s *Fall of Manna* (fig. 126), the raising of Moses’ arms is introduced into the desert miracle

⁵⁸ Jewish commentary on this chapter emphasizes the victory of the faithful, that “when we look upwards to God, away from earthly things, we prevail; when we look downwards, we are lost.” Schapiro, *Words and Pictures* 18.

⁵⁹ For more on the medieval interpretation of the raising of Moses’ hands, see Schapiro, *Words and Pictures* 32, n. 67.

⁶⁰ Gregory, *Life* 90-91.

⁶¹ Gregory, *Life* 91.

⁶² “The written letters kill, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Cor 3: 6) Referring to the contemporary Jews: “As it is, to this day, whenever Moses is read, their hearts are covered with a veil.” (2 Cor. 3: 15) See also Mellinkoff, “Round-Topped Tablets” 42.

scenes.⁶³ While in central Italy the posture of Moses as he points his staff suggests that he commanded the miracles, in Venetian territories his stance implies that he is overcome by the miraculous moment. Rather than command, Moses bears witness. Tintoretto's image of Moses draws on this mystical tradition but applies it to a narrative not commonly composed as a miracle scene. In approaching the reception of the tablets of the Law at Mount Sinai as an inherently spiritual encounter, Tintoretto has done something completely new.

The Nudity of Moses

The conspicuous near-nudity of Moses in imitation of God and his heavenly attendants is another radical departure from tradition. Tintoretto depicts Moses stripped bare to the hip with nothing more than a diaphanous cloth thrown over his right arm. With his arms thrown wide, the arch of his body accentuates his nakedness. Above, God the Father and all those in his heavenly entourage wear nothing more than loincloths, which hang loosely on their hips and trail through the air in swirling motion. The absence of clothing lends an air of lightness and buoyancy to the upper half of the painting: there is nothing to weigh these figures down.

Unlike the Hebrews below who can be identified as Jews by their earrings, without garments Moses is stripped of all earthly signifiers. As we have seen, earlier images were insistent on locating Moses via the style of his dress in specific worldly roles, especially leader, legislator and priest. Again, we can look to Rosselli's fresco as the case in point where Moses and God mimic each other in outward appearance: both have flowing white beards and hair and both wear long regal robes. After Moses

⁶³ Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 197.

descends Mount Sinai to present the tablets to the Hebrews, he appropriates an additional dark cloak trimmed with gold in imitation of the Lord in glory. The mimicking of robes, much like the placing of the tablets into the hands of the prophet, stresses Moses position as the earthly ambassador for God. At the Madonna dell'Orto, however, Moses is stripped of any robes that might indicate a favored status, religious or civic, and he is left with a simple white loincloth. Moses' imitation of the Lord is not limited to a specific role. Instead, he mirrors the Almighty in his purity of spirit.

Stripping the body bare to nothing more than a white loincloth is, like the orans posture, in imitation of Christ on the cross, an act of vulnerability, of surrender and, by extension, of spiritual purity. To mimic Christ in this way was to make a conscious association with his glory: his sacrifice (reenacted during Mass in the chapel) that leads in turn to his triumph in heaven (depicted at the pinnacle of the *Last Judgement* opposite). Given this association, it is not surprising that the simple white loincloth was the traditional garment worn by baptismal candidates as a sign of their new commitment to Christ.⁶⁴ Like the neophyte, Moses throws off the burdens of the world—in direct contrast to the narrative of the Hebrews below—as he prepares to meet God. By stripping bare, Moses exhibits his spiritual readiness.

Gregory of Nyssa's *De Vita Moysis* emphasizes the spiritual necessity of the shedding of earthly things from the body in preparation for meeting God. In the first part of the book, the biography, Gregory describes Moses as “stripped as it were of the people's fear.” He explains that “the one who is going to associate intimately with

⁶⁴ For an account of how the detail of the white loincloth is an indicator of a candidate for baptism, and how it has been overlooked in other works of art, see Thomas Puttfarcken, “Caravaggio's ‘Story of St. Matthew’: A Challenge to the Conventions of Painting,” *Art History* 21 (1998): 163-181.

God must go beyond all that is visible.” (Book 1, 46)⁶⁵ Indeed, the theophany at Sinai is not the only time that Moses removed clothing. In his allegorical reading of the life of the prophet, Gregory discusses why the removal of shoes was necessary when Moses met the Lord the first time, at the burning bush: “Sandaled feet cannot ascend that height where the light of truth is seen, but the dead and earthly covering of skins, which was placed around our nature at the beginning when we were found naked because of disobedience to the divine will, must be removed from the feet of our souls.” (Book 2, 22)⁶⁶ The evocations of the burning bush scene in Tintoretto’s *Moses at Mount Sinai* will be examined in greater detail shortly. However, at this point it is enough to recognize how presenting Moses as bare reflects Gregory’s treatment of clothing as “earthly” and a constant sign of “disobedience to divine will”.

The Athleticism of Moses

While Moses’ nudity suggests his readiness to meet the Lord, his physique implies his fitness for that meeting. Tintoretto portrays a man of extraordinary physical prowess. Rising out of the clouds, the figure appears effortless as he assumes his open posture. Though muscles ripple across his torso and flex tightly in his arms, there is no sense of strain on his face. Again, he mirrors the image of God, whose lean, strapping form contradicts the lithe grace with which his body moves through space.

Tintoretto is able to depict the athletic body of Moses as a direct consequence of his nudity. In Chapter 2, the figure of Moses was always clothed. With the exception of his characteristic white beard, which signified his imitation of the wisdom of the Lord, his physical characteristics had no function. The emphasis was

⁶⁵ Gregory, *Life* 43.

on the robes that he wore, the role that he literally put on his body. At the Madonna dell'Orto, however, the image of Moses is distinguished by the body itself as a reflection of his spirit within.

In both the classical and the Christian worlds the fitness of the external body was traditionally a symbol for spiritual fitness within. Springing from ancient philosophy, the nude athlete was a symbol of the triumph of virtue: the life of discipline, the exercise of physical control.⁶⁷ Hercules was the archetype for the powerful external physique that expressed an equally powerful internal soul of virtue. A talisman for the city of Venice, his image in public spaces underlined the Venetian affinity for such symbolism. In the fifth century example of *Hercules and the Erymanthian Boar* on the west façade of San Marco, the hero is presented nude with muscles flexed: firm biceps, broad chest and powerful thighs. Located on the state church, the power of the body acts as a metaphor for the labor for virtue of the Christian.⁶⁸ This “gymnastic ideal,” as Colin Eisler put it, was originally taken up by St. Paul and later by the early martyrs and medieval monastics, who struggled against temptation for the victory of virtue.⁶⁹

Just as in the epistles, which often employed the allegory of the foot race (e.g. Heb. 12: 1), Gregory of Nyssa described life itself as a “race for virtue.”⁷⁰ Stated in

⁶⁶ Gregory, *Life* 59.

⁶⁷ For the roots of the symbolism of the athletic body in antiquity, see Colin Eisler, “The Athlete of Virtue: The Iconography of Asceticism,” *Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York UP, 1961) 82-84.

⁶⁸ Hercules also appears on the ducal monuments of Doge Pietro Mocenigo (1474-76) in SS. Giovanni e Paolo, as an appropriation of the metaphor presented on the façade of San Marco (figs. 131-32). Brown, *Venice and Antiquity* 21-22, 112-13.

⁶⁹ Eisler, “Athlete of Virtue” 83 and 85. A similar case is found in Tintoretto's *Temptation of St. Anthony* at the Church of San Trovaso, Venice. Devils pull at the saint's clothes to reveal his aged but muscular flesh, indicative of his struggle for righteousness. Paul Hills, “Decorum and Desire in Some Works by Tintoretto,” *Decorum in Renaissance Narrative Art*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis and Anka Bednarek (London: U of London, 1992) 121.

⁷⁰ Gregory, *Life* 30-31.

the preface to his biography of Moses, Gregory establishes his view of the prophet's life up as a relentless journey to absolute virtue, to God. Indeed, it is this definition that informs Tintoretto's portrayal God at the Madonna dell'Orto. More will be said on the issue of God as absolute virtue in a later section. However, at this point it is enough to recognize that the athleticism of Moses' body at Sinai reflects not only the physical competence necessary to scale the mountain but also symbolizes the internal fitness of Moses in life's struggle to reach the Lord.

The Use of Light

While the posture, nudity and athleticism of Moses heighten the spiritual transaction that takes place at Mount Sinai, it is the use of light that truly sets the Madonna dell'Orto image apart from other depictions of this subject. The focal point from which all of the light radiates is, of course, the figure of God. A golden field is emitted from his upper body like an oversized halo. Beyond the perimeter of this golden light, white beams shoot out in all directions, illuminating the whole sky. These rays appear to shoot through the body of Moses like the air, bleaching his form to a pure white. Orange beams directed from the face of God to the face of the prophet highlight the direction of the force. The straining arch of Moses' back and billowing of the scarf over his shoulder imply that this light is pure power.

While the works discussed in Chapter 2 focused on the human and the earthly—the handing over of the physical tablets to a particular man; the garments worn as metaphor for station in society—Tintoretto's painting is purely about the immaterial, the spirit. This distinction between convention and the Madonna dell'Orto painting suggests a difference in the scriptural sources. The earlier works rely on the

initial reception of the Law described in Exodus 31: 18: “When he had finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him two Tablets of the Testimony, Tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.” (Exod. 31: 18) At the Madonna dell’Orto, however, with the light of God blazing, the upper portion of the painting reflects the experience of Moses alluded to in Exodus 34: 29: “When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, as he was coming down the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face was radiant because he had been talking to him.” This verse, with its emphasis on the encounter of God and Moses—rather than on the transmission of the tablets—and the glorification that Moses undergoes as a result, associates more sensibly with the unusual details of posture, nudity and athleticism discussed so far. Though in Scripture it is the reception of the Law that occurs simultaneously with the blasphemy of the Hebrews, Tintoretto conflates the renewal of the Law with the earlier idol worship. Before we can discuss the intention of that combination, however, we must first examine the nature of the light that emanates from God.

Tintoretto’s unique use of light, especially as a dematerializing force, is comparable to other moments in the Bible. In the New Testament it is clearly linked with the intensely mystical Transfiguration, when Jesus appears to the apostles with Moses and Elijah.⁷¹ (Matt 17: 1-13; Mark 9: 2-10; Luke 9: 28-36) The Gospel of Matthew recounts that Jesus “was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as light.” (Matt 17: 2) The nature of Christ as pure light is also alluded to in the Gospel of John, where the Word of God is described as

⁷¹ Origen (c. 185-254) suggested that only the face of Moses was glorified at Mount Sinai but his whole body became glorified at the Transfiguration when he converted to the Lord. For a detailed discussion

“the real light that gives light to everyone.” (John 1: 9)⁷² Like God descending to Mount Sinai from the heavens surrounded by a great golden glow, the Gospels describe the true nature of Jesus—the second person of the Trinity—as light.

However, the light in the *Moses at Mount Sinai* finds its most powerful analogy in the story of the burning bush. (Exod. 3: 1-6) Though Scripture describes only the voice of the Lord emerging from the flames, it was common in the Renaissance, as we have seen in the Sistine Chapel and in the Logge, to anthropomorphize God within the bush (figs. 90 and 167). Early Christian prototypes, however, did not portray the figure of God in the bush. For example, the scene in San Vitale, Ravenna portrays only the hand of God reaching out from the bush (fig. 27). It appears that the Venetians tended to follow this example. In the Moses cupola at San Marco only the blazing fire can be seen (fig. 20). In the Giorgionesque painting discussed in the previous chapter, the figure of God descends from above but the figure of Moses appears to respond only to the fiery bush (fig. 129).⁷³ A decade after the Madonna dell’Orto work was complete, Jacopo Bassano painted a rendition of the subject (Uffizi, Florence; 1572; fig. 110) where the fire shoots upwards but a brilliant ray of light is also directed at the stunned Moses.⁷⁴ Like Tintoretto’s Mount Sinai image, Bassano’s Moses is bowled over by the power of God that appears as light. Indeed, Gregory of Nyssa, in another mystical interpretation of Scripture, explains

of Origen’s comments and their relationship to the iconography of the light rays of Moses in Christian and Jewish thought, see Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses* 80-81.

⁷² See also John 12: 46: “I have come into the world as light, to prevent anyone who believes in me from staying in the dark any more.”

⁷³ In Veronese’s *Burning Bush* (fig. 224) it is unclear if Moses can see the anthropomorphic vision of God or if the face of the Lord is shielded by the flames and smoke. Certainly, it is not the immediate face-to-face exchange that is depicted elsewhere.

⁷⁴ For a recent analysis of this painting, see Paolo Berdini, *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano: Painting as Visual Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) 37-40. There is also a *Landscape with*

that the radiance of God “shines upon us through this thorny flesh...the true light and the truth itself.” (Book 2, 26)⁷⁵ Just as the light pierces the brambles of the bush, so it penetrates the earthly nature of the body.

The power of the light that shines from the face of God at Mount Sinai is the intense purity of the spirit that he pours forth. Indeed, so pure is this spirit that, as Tintoretto portrays, Moses himself becomes radiant. St Paul, writing more explicitly on the renewal of the Law, compared all Christians to Moses: “And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory.” (2 Cor. 3:18) Like Tintoretto’s painting, Moses reflects God like a mirror in spirit, not simply a mirror of a particular earthly role as depicted elsewhere. Above all, in his glorified state, Moses becomes a model for every man, for every Christian on the journey to full union with God.

The antithesis to this model was, of course, the idolatrous way of the Hebrews. It is St Paul, in the second letter to the Corinthians, who links these two narratives in an extended allegorical discussion. He writes: “If our gospel seems to be veiled at all, it is so to those who are on the way to destruction, the unbelievers whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world, so that they cannot see shining the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Cor. 4: 3-4) By alluding to

Shepherds and Moses and the Burning Bush by the workshop of Jacopo Bassano in the Accademia. See Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia...secolo XVI* cat. 38.

⁷⁵ Gregory, *Life* 60-61. The mystical nature of the light of God at the burning bush—a flame that pierces but does not consume—was a traditional antetype to Mary’s virgin birth of Jesus. Gregory appears to be the first to make this comparison: “From this we learn also the mystery of the Virgin: The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth.” (Book 2, 21) Gregory, *Life* 59, n.28.

the golden calf, St Paul cautions the reader against the temptations of earthly things, of “things which are seen” (2 Cor. 4: 18), that obscure the true light of the Lord.

Gregory of Nyssa’s reading is again more explicit. Regarding Moses’ shining visage after returning from Mount Sinai, he writes: “For in truth, as the Gospel says, when he shall come in his glory escorted by all the angels, he is scarcely bearable and visible to the righteous. He who is impious and follows the Judaizing heresy remains without a share in that vision, for let the impious be removed, as Isaiah says, and he shall not see the glory of the Lord.” (Book 2, 218)⁷⁶ Gregory’s commentary refers specifically to the Last Judgement, when the Lord appears with all his angels (Matt. 25: 31). This observation sums up the place of the *Moses at Mount Sinai and the Blasphemy of the Hebrews* in the main chapel program: those who, like Moses, pursue the true light of the Lord will find glory at the Judgement; those who pursue the earthly way of the Jews will be denied the vision of God for eternity.

Conclusion

The upper portion of the left lateral painting in the Madonna dell’Orto main chapel is a uniquely spiritual interpretation of Moses receiving the tablets of the Law. By portraying Moses as an ecstatic, nude and athletic figure shot through with the power of the Lord, Tintoretto has divorced the prophet from his traditional roles as leader, lawgiver and priest and presented him instead as an everyman, a model for the Christian pilgrim ready to encounter God. Above all, the *Moses at Mount Sinai* suggests a spiritual path to righteousness that is at once rooted in the eastern Christian

⁷⁶ Gregory, *Life* 111. See Matt. 25: 31.

heritage of Venice and at the same time the antithesis of the worldly anxieties that plagued the Venetians at that specific moment in history.

The Importance of Free Will

Free will was reasserted during the Counter Reformation as a fundamental of the Catholic faith.⁷⁷ The visual and thematic contrasts of the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* and the *Moses at Mount Sinai* underline the role of personal responsibility along the *via salvationis*. There are two points that highlight this further: the *Cardinal Virtues* in the apse and the cloud that bisects the two narratives of the lateral painting. A few words need to be said on these components of the program in order to understand fully how Tintoretto's work encapsulates the spirit of the Catholic Reformation and renders ultimately a triumphant vision of the importance of the actions of man.

The Cardinal Virtues

As Moses throws open his arms to God, the arch of his body leads appropriately in the direction of the *Cardinal Virtues* (figs. 197-98). The four stately female figures of *Temperance*, *Justice*, *Prudence* and *Fortitude* are swathed in classicizing robes, each nimbed with a halo of yellow light. *Temperance* leans back to her right, arms folded beneath her breast, gazing heavenward. At either side of her feet are two ornate amphorae. Next to the right is *Justice* also arching back to gain a view of the once visible angels above. Her right leg extends in elegant *contrapposto* as she stretches

⁷⁷ The Council of Trent stressed the cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom: "When God touches man's heart through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he could reject it; and yet, without God's grace, he cannot by his own free will move himself toward justice in God's sight." Council of Trent 1547 in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Chapman, 1999) 433.

out her hands to display the sword and the scales. *Prudence* with hands on hips rests her weight on her left side. At her right foot coils a serpent while at her left a compass leans against the wall of the painted niche. Finally, *Fortitude* hunches over to rest an elbow on the remains of an antique column, its foliate capital lying on its side to the right. The fabric of her outer robe clings to her right leg revealing its solid musculature. With arms crossed she peers down across her left shoulder to gaze in the direction of the *Last Judgement*. Together these four figures form the link between the two giant lateral canvases: the rhetorical question of *quo vadis* and the response that the answer to that question elicits at the end of time.

The graceful angling of the bodies of the *Virtues* as they gaze up at the once visible frescoes of angels with trumpets and the choreographed twist of *Fortitude* toward the *Last Judgement* highlight the Catholic belief, underlined during the Counter Reformation, that the cardinal virtues along with the three theological virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity—lead to eternal salvation.⁷⁸ By foregrounding the cardinal virtues in the main chapel program and placing Charity, the figure holding two babes at her chest, as the first to rise to Christ in the *Last Judgement*, Tintoretto emphasizes the importance of action during earthly life in reaching paradise. Recalling the athletic fitness of Moses in the left lateral painting, there is the implication throughout the program that external effort betrays a righteous heart.⁷⁹ Salvation comes through the pursuit of virtue, not simply through grace.

⁷⁸ Wis. 8: 7: “Virtues are the fruit of [Wisdom’s] labors, since it is she who teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude.”

⁷⁹ Like the figure of Hercules discussed earlier, the cardinal virtues were also appropriated for ducal monuments (e.g. the tomb of Doge Francesco Foscari (1423-57) and the tomb of Doge Nicolò Tron (1471-73), both in the Frari). For more on the use of the cardinal virtues on ducal monuments, see Pincus, *Arco Foscari* 403 and “Tomb of Doge Nicolò Tron” 142. For a general discussion of the “secularization” of the cardinal virtues in the period of the Renaissance, see Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* 74. See also the virtues which ring the perimeter of the *Ascension Dome* at San Marco (fig. 22).

Gregory of Nyssa, throughout the *De Vita Moysis*, characterizes the life of Moses as the pursuit of absolute virtue, the race to reach God himself: “Certainly whoever pursues true virtue participates in nothing other than God, because he is himself absolute virtue.” (Book 1, 7)⁸⁰ Gregory repeatedly describes Moses’ experiences in terms of virtue: his virtue wins over his father-in-law, Jethro (Book 1, 19); the slaying of the Egyptian is a triumph of virtue over the adversary of virtue (Book 2, 15); and Moses’ staff is the “invincible rod of virtue” (Book 2, 64).⁸¹ Indeed, when he describes the reception of the Law, Gregory explains that the “divine ordinances” that Moses received at Sinai were “the teachings concerning virtue.” (Book 1, 47)⁸² In each instance, however, Moses’ earned his virtue through constant striving in his life.

As Tintoretto’s rendering of Moses indicates, the path to virtue is not an easy one: it requires complete submission to the Almighty, purity and fitness of spirit in order to break away from the earthly temptations pictured below. Again, a parallel can be found in Gregory’s commentary. He makes an analogy between the virtuous life and a difficult birth where the midwife is free will. (Book 2, 5)⁸³ As the model for the Christian, the life of Moses demonstrates that the progression towards union with God—towards union with absolute virtue on the day of Judgement—depends on the individual’s choice to make that difficult journey.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Gregory, *Life* 31.

⁸¹ Gregory, *Life* 34, 58 and 68.

⁸² Gregory, *Life* 43.

⁸³ Gregory, *Life* 56.

⁸⁴ Gregory of Nyssa describes Moses’ life as “set forth as a pattern of virtue for those who come after them.” (Book 2, 48) Gregory, *Life* 65. Therefore, prophet’s biography is a model for life’s journey rather than a precedent for an earthly role in society.

The Cloud as the Boundary of Choice

As has been shown, the Venetians, like the Hebrews in the *Madonna dell'Orto* painting, were having difficulty choosing between the path of righteousness and the way of the materialistic temptations of man. The *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* emphasizes the occasion of choice: the moment of construction, the instance of action in preparation to cast the idol rather than the usual scene of the worship of the idol. There is the carrying of the model, the procession of gold, and the debate between the engineering leaders. It is at a point of decision: will the Hebrews choose the path of God or continue on the way of man? The way of man, the path of the earthly and the material on which they tread now, is strewn with piles of gold: the devalued commodity; the uncomfortable association with the Jew; the symbol of blindness, blasphemy and corruption.

Scripture tells us that the Hebrews will remain on the path to punishment, that they will divorce themselves totally from God's light of virtue and remain in the darkness of evil.⁸⁵ Indeed, the dark cloud that hovers at the mountaintop distinguishes the earthly sinfulness of the Hebrews below and the spiritual glory of Moses above. However, Tintoretto includes a subtle detail that suggests that, although the cloud categorizes the two narratives, it is in fact a permeable layer.⁸⁶ The bridge between the two registers of the painting is the young man at the back left of the troupe carrying the calf. Even as he processes the idol, he fixes his eyes on the scene at the top of the

⁸⁵ Gregory uses the metaphor of dark and light when he compares the Egyptians to the Hebrews in captivity: "Some continue on in darkness, driven by their evil pursuits to the darkness of wickedness, while others are made radiant by the light of virtue." (Book 2, 81) Gregory, *Life* 73.

⁸⁶ Douglas-Scott goes so far to suggest that the division between the Israelites and Moses is total, illustrating that Moses is endowed with higher spiritual status than his sinful followers." Douglas-Scott, "Art Patronage" 272. However, this interpretation clashes with the images portrayal of Moses as an everyman as well as with Gregory's understanding of the biography of Moses as a model for the Christian.

mountain, his mouth open in wonderment. The pause to look up shifts the focus from the decadence of the mob below to the upper half of the painting and the choice of Moses, the alternate set of values, the way of God. The inclusion of the simple gesture of the young man suggests that the cloud is not a predetermined boundary but a zone of choice through which the willing and able—those who follow in the footsteps of Moses—may penetrate.⁸⁷ God had poured out his grace—he called the Hebrews to be the Chosen People—and now it is up to them to live their half of the bargain. It is this reciprocal relationship between faith and free will that is at the heart of the Catholic faith.

Conclusion

Tintoretto's *Blasphemy of the Hebrews and the Moses at Mount Sinai* pointed up what the Counter Reform Church sought to emphasize: that art must be an instrument of instruction.⁸⁸ In creating a composition in two halves, he presents the journey of life on a diverging path: the way of the error of faith and the way of complete faith. However, the rhetoric of the painting is put into sharper focus by its appeal to local circumstances. The naturalism of the lower half of the painting, its inclusion of genre details that resonated in the Venetian context and even more specifically in the context of the Madonna dell'Orto parish on the border of the Jewish Ghetto, renders

⁸⁷ "The boundary, the interface layer which separates categories of time and space, is the zone of the sacred, the forbidden, that which is taboo; God when seen from one side of the fence, Sin when seen from the other." Edmund Leach, "Michelangelo's Genesis: A Structuralist Interpretation of the Central Panels of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling," *Semiotica* 56 (1985): 20.

⁸⁸ The Church's teaching on art was presented at the Council of Trent 1563: "Bishops should teach with care that the faithful are instructed and strengthened by commemorating and frequently recalling the articles of our faith through the expression in pictures or other likenesses of the stories of the mysteries of our redemption." Norman P. Tanner, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. vol. 2 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990) 775. For more on the changing concept of art in the period, see Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 260-64.

an abstract theology powerfully real and present. The drama of the upper half of the painting with its explosion of light rejects the central Italian model of a human meeting and presents instead a spiritual encounter that recalls the eastern roots of the lagoon city. In bringing together the concerns of the universal church and those of the local Venetian, Tintoretto produced a teaching image of profound impact.

In the left lateral painting of the main chapel of the Madonna dell'Orto, Tintoretto sets a new understanding of Moses. In earlier images in Venice and the Veneto the prophet was incorporated into larger group scenes. Tintoretto sets him apart. In central Italy Moses was a prototype for various civic and religious roles: leader, lawgiver and priest. Tintoretto fashions him as a model for Christian life in general. While a traditional Renaissance treatment of the wandering in the desert would call on Eucharistic themes, Tintoretto pictures the journey through the desert as a testing of the will.⁸⁹ The way of Moses is a pattern for the virtuous life in this no-man's-land between damnation and Paradise.

⁸⁹ "The desert is the place of trial and hence pre-eminently the place for exercising the will." Hackel, *Byzantine Saint* 32.

Chapter 5

The Moses Cycle at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco

Introduction

Between 1575 and 1578, Tintoretto produced the first multi-narrative cycle of the Moses stories in Venice since the thirteenth-century atrium mosaics in San Marco. Painted for the ceiling of the Sala Superiore at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco (fig. 7), the three principal canvases of the *Brazen Serpent*, the *Fall of Manna* and the *Water from the Rock* (figs. 199-203) initiated a grand decorative scheme of thirty-four paintings for the ceiling and walls of the Sala.

These three Moses narratives at San Rocco will be considered here as a further development of the Venetian understanding of Moses. Again, drawing on the Veneto traditions as well as his work at the Madonna dell'Orto, Tintoretto amplifies the visual impact of the narratives while at the same time rendering more precisely the role of Moses as the model man of God. Just as in the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews and Moses at Mount Sinai*, the San Rocco images interweave the broader theological interests of the Counter Reform with localized interests, this time of the Scuola brethren. In these contexts, the San Rocco paintings demonstrate that the figure of Moses is not simply an antetype but a figure projecting profound meaning in himself.

The Instigation and Development of the Ceiling Cycle

Tintoretto's work for the Scuola Grande di San Rocco is the best documented of the artist's projects. The Scuola's own archive holds records of each bureaucratic stage of the commission, including rare written proposals by Tintoretto himself, and the

Venetian state archive retains a sequence of dated payment receipts for materials and labor. R. Berliner's meticulous survey and publication of these materials has made this information easily accessible for nearly a century.¹

Although ephemeral painted hangings—*canevazze*—had ornamented the walls of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco since 1542, the *confratelli* deliberated many years over the installation of a permanent decorative scheme for the Sala Superiore of their meetinghouse.² In May 1574 a decision was taken to begin with the ceiling and work commenced on the lavish wooden frame.³ Still lacking a pictorial program by the following summer, though, the *banca* and *zonta* (*aggiunta*) accepted an offer from Tintoretto, brother of the Scuola since 1565 and the artist responsible for the decoration of the *albergo* in the previous decade.⁴ On 2 July 1575 he had proposed a painting half the size of the ceiling: “Sparse dauanti la presente bancha et zonta ms. jacommo tintoretto pitor hofriendosi far el quadro di mezo el sofitado della nostra sala.”⁵ On 22 June 1576 Tintoretto promised to deliver the painting for the upcoming Feast of Saint Roch, 16 August: “Hauendosi offerto ms. Giacomo Tentoreto di far il quadro di la sala granda die mezzo et quello donar alla schola nostra et darlo finito per

¹ R. Berliner, “Forschungen über die Tätigkeit Tintoretts in der Scuola di San Rocco,” *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt* 55 (1919-20): 468-73, 492-97. For a summary of Tintoretto's dealings with the Scuola on the upper room commissions, see Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* 1: 200-201. See also Nichols, *Tintoretto* 175-76.

² ASR, *Registri delle Parti*, II, fol. 1r, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 472.

³ ASR, *Registri delle Parti*, II, fol. 347v, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 472.

⁴ The *banca* was a “fourteen member elected executive board responsible for daily operation of diverse philanthropic activities and initiation of legislation for all artistic projects.” Philip L. Sohm, “The Scuola Grande di San Marco, 1437-1550: the Architecture of a Venetian Lay Confraternity,” diss., Johns Hopkins U, 1978, 3. It was not unusual for a *scuola* to enlist one of its own members as artist. Over half the artists working at the Scuola Grande di San Marco between the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries were *confratelli*. Sohm, “San Marco” 240.

⁵ ASR, *Registri delle Parti*, II, fol. 355v, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 473.

la festa de ms. san rocco prossima.”⁶ On 6 December 1576 the artist received payment for the completion of the *Brazen Serpent*, the monumental central canvas.⁷

Then on 13 January 1577 Tintoretto proposed to paint two more main pictures for the ceiling:

Hauendosi presentato el magnifico messer Giacomo Tentoreto nostro amorevuol fratello di schuola et detto al magnifico guardian grande con proferirsi di uoler far l’opera delli doi quadri di la sala grande...ricercando per hora solamente che li sia dato la tuor le telle et colori che ui anderano er il far delle figure et opere di detti quadri et che finiti et comodati quelli alli suoi lochi traterà dil premio.⁸

The *banca* and *zonta* voted decidedly in the artist’s favor—fifty-two to four—and advanced him thirty ducats in exactly one week.⁹ Thus, work on the *Fall of Manna* (altar end of the ceiling) and the *Water from the Rock* (far end of the ceiling) was underway.¹⁰ However, just over three months after this major project was started, on 25 March 1577 Tintoretto extended his offer to include all the remaining paintings for the ceiling. In his own words, he wrote:

Hora volendo mostrar l’animo mio, et affettione, ch’io porto alla ditta mia benedeta scola, mi offero di più, che volend’io faci futt’il restante de ditto soffittado con la medesima conditione delli preditti doi quadri.¹¹

⁶ ASR, *Registri delle Parti*, II, fol. 364v, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 473.

⁷ ASV, *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, II consegna, 423, *Ricevute*, II, fol. 57r, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 473, n. 29. Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 332.

⁸ ASR, *Registri delle Parti*, fol. 370v, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 492.

⁹ ASV, *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, II consegna, 423, *Ricevute*, II, fol. 58r, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 492.

¹⁰ Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 333 and 334.

¹¹ ASR *Registro delle Parti*, III, fol. 3v, qtd. in Berliner, “Forschungen” 492. The full letter is reprinted in Berliner and in Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* 1: 201.

Tintoretto began painting on 20 April 1577 ten oval canvases—*Fall of Man, God the Father Appears to Moses, Pillar of Smoke, Jonah and the Whale, Vision of Ezekiel, Jacob's Ladder, Sacrifice of Isaac, Elisha Multiplies the Bread, Elijah Fed by the Angel, and Passover* (figs. 204-13)—and eight small diamond-shaped *chiaroscuro*—*Vision of Jeremiah, Abraham and Melchizedek, Elijah on the Burning Chariot, Daniel Saved by the Angel, Samson Drawing Water from the Donkey's Jaw, Samuel and Saul, Finding of Moses, and Three Children in the Furnace*—to accompany the three principal pictures.¹²

With the entire ceiling program of the Sala Superiore under his direction, Tintoretto went on to offer on 27 November 1577 to decorate the walls at a rate of three paintings per year.¹³ In February 1578 the ceiling was complete and work on the Gospel murals commenced.¹⁴ Completed in 1581, these include the *Adoration of the Shepherds, Baptism of Christ, Resurrection of Christ, Agony in the Garden, Last Supper, Miracle of Loaves and Fishes, Raising of Lazarus, Ascension, Pool of Bethesda, Temptation of Christ, and St Roch and St Sebastian*. The altarpiece of the *Apparition of St Roch* was not installed until 1588.

As he did at the Madonna dell'Orto, Tintoretto made offers to the Scuola di San Rocco that they could not refuse. Scholars have speculated on Tintoretto's motivations in asking to be compensated only for canvases and pigments: was he single-mindedly looking for a vehicle to earn him fame or did his protestations of love

¹² ASV, *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, II consegna, 413, *Ricevute*, qtd. in Berliner, "Forschungen" 493. Giuseppe Angeli replaced the *chiaroscuro* with copies, c. 1777-78. Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 90. Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 335-44.

¹³ Tintoretto submitted another letter to the San Rocco *banca*. ASR, *Registro delle Parti*, III, fol. 4r, qtd. in Berliner, "Forschungen" 493.

¹⁴ ASR, *Registri delle Parti*, III, fol. 12r, qtd. in Berliner, "Forschungen" 494.

and devotion to the Scuola and to St. Roch express an honest desire to offer charity?¹⁵

Whatever his personal ambitions were, artistically, at least, his directive was clear: to produce images of Moses on such a large scale and with such narrative complexity as had not been witnessed in Venice before. In pursuing such a task, Tintoretto created for himself another opportunity to develop the Venetian understanding of Moses.

The Scuola Grande di San Rocco

The Role of the Scuola in Public Life

Although the cult of Saint Roch (1293-1327), patron of plague victims, was approved in 1414 in Venice, it appears to have gained momentum only after the translation of some of his relics to the city in 1485.¹⁶ Thus, while the other *scuole grandi* had roots in the thirteenth century, San Rocco was not founded until 1478 during a time of plague.¹⁷ In the next ten years the membership of the San Rocco exceeded 300 and was continuing to grow when it was officially granted the rank of Scuola Grande.¹⁸ By the time Tintoretto came to decorate the ceiling of the Sala Superiore, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco occupied a position at the heart of Venetian life.

The *scuole grandi* of Venice provided institutional means of relieving the spiritual suffering of the city. Organizations of discipline and piety, the *scuole* were charged to celebrate Mass regularly for the dead and to provide charity for the resident poor. However, their more visible activity was their regular participation in

¹⁵ Hills, "Tintoretto's Marketing" 116-17. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 176.

¹⁶ Marina Foscari Malacrea, "Cerimonie pubbliche a Venezia," *Il serenissimo doge*, ed. Umberto Franzoi (Treviso: Canova, 1986) 176-77. Tramontin, *Culto dei Santi* 89.

¹⁷ For the establishment of the Scuola, see Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 37-38. For the development of the iconography and meaning of Saint Roch in Venice in relation to the recurring plague, see Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Le immagini della peste nella cultura figurative veneziana," *Venezia e la peste 1348/1797* (Venice: Marsilio, 1979) 214-24.

¹⁸ Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 38, n. 26.

public processions. The members, lay brethren, would march through the city scourging themselves in an effort to purge the sins of the world. Thus they earned the early name *scuole de battuti*: “of the beaten.”

By the sixteenth century, however, the somber parades of flagellants gave way to ceremonies and pageants of splendor, such as the Corpus Christi and True Cross processions that were described in the previous chapter.¹⁹ In part the change in the principal activities of the confraternities was a natural result of their relationship with the Venetian government. Despite their sacred prerogatives, the *scuole* were not subject to a religious authority but to the Council of Ten. Underlying their devotions and pious processions, therefore, was the obligation to contribute to “the honor and state of the Doge, commonwealth and fatherland and of every good and faithful Christian.”²⁰ Though charity remained the focus of the *scuole* activities, by shifting the emphasis of the public displays from suffering and humility to pomp and grandeur these events had a combined function of offering to God and expression the civic glory. The *scuole* married the civic and religious duties to become a locus of Venetian piety and pride.

The Role of Decoration

At mid-century the confraternities suffered criticism for their investments in splendor, particularly for their artistic endeavors. In 1541 Alessandro Caravia, an occasional writer, published *Il sogno di Caravia* in which he accused the Scuola di San Rocco of hypocrisy. He complained that their building projects were planned with extreme

¹⁹ For the changing principles of the *scuole* see Pullan, *Rich and Poor* Chapters 1; and Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1989) Chapter 4. See also Sohm, “San Marco” 1-3.

luxury while the poor went without: “ducati ottantamila spenduto hanno/ che gli bastaua ben spenderne sei/ Il resto sparagnar, che spesi è in uano/ Per scalci, e nudi, che gridano ohimeì.”²¹ The Venetian government shared Caravia’s concerns. The Council of Ten decreed in 1543 that the *scuole grandi* were spending money on superfluous “devices and banquets” which “ought to go in alms to the poor.”²² San Rocco, along with the other *scuole*, was in danger of focusing more on its own vainglory than on contributing to the common good.

However, in the view of the Venetian government, charity was not the only contribution that the *scuole* had to make to the commonwealth. While the Council of Ten was keen to limit *scuole* luxury expenditure, it continued to demand sumptuousness in service to God and state.²³ From this point of view, monumental decorative schemes like Tintoretto’s functioned like the elaborate processions in Piazza San Marco. Just as the parades offered glory to God in a public space, so too the canvases reflected on the magnificence of God in a communal area. Unlike the classicizing façade of the Scuola, which was Caravia’s particular hobbyhorse, the interior decoration was entirely devoted to Biblical narratives and to the devotion of saints.²⁴ As for cost, regular payments to an artist for the production of pious works is a very different thing to great sums spent on pagan architectural lavishness. Chapter 3 discussed briefly how this idea functioned at the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi, where

²⁰ Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 54.

²¹ Alessandro Caravia, *Il sogno di Caravia* (Venice, 1541) 12v. For more on Caravia’s criticism of the *scuole grandi*, see Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 117-121, 130-31.

²² ASV, *Consiglio dei Dieci, Registro Comune 1542* 107, qtd. in Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 126.

²³ For a discussion of the balance the *scuole* had struck between personal and pious magnificence in the decades after Caravia’s publication, see Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 127-31.

²⁴ The building of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco was begun in 1515 to the design of Bartolomeo Bon. The ground floor level was complete in 1524. Work continued from 1527 to 1549 on the first floor and the façade under the direction of Antonio Scarpagnino. Caravia made specific mention of the

Bonifacio's *Gathering of Manna and Quails* (fig. 114) fit into a broader program produced over several decades. As Philip Cottrell notes, the ongoing, long-term process of completing great decorative schemes reinforced the Venetian virtue of sustained, cumulative contribution to the republic.²⁵ While the Council of Ten might have warned the Scuola about excessive outlay on banquets, it must have surely considered the commissioning of great, ongoing religious cycles as part of their dual obligation to church and state.²⁶

It has, in fact, been shown that the *scuole* made a point of aligning themselves to the state through their art. By choosing artists who worked at the Ducal Palace to decorate their halls, the confraternities conformed to the artistic standard set by the republic.²⁷ For instance, in the fifteenth century Gentile Bellini was the obvious artist of choice at the Scuola Grande di San Marco: he was both a long-standing member of the Scuola and the official painter to the doge. Likewise, Tintoretto's increasing involvement in the decorative programs at San Rocco was both convenient and politically appropriate. He was a *confratello* at the Scuola since 1565 and he had already been engaged on projects at the Ducal Palace since the mid-fifties. By the time the Sala Superiore decorations were underway he was stepping up his contributions at the Palace. By employing a local artist, who also happened to be entrenched in official ducal commissions, on their monumental painted programs, the

carving on the Scuola façade: "Fogliami, Harpie, e tante belle teste/ Colonne stratagliate à foggie nuoue." Caravia, *Il sogno* 12v.

²⁵ Cottrell, "Corporate Colors" 662.

²⁶ Nichols has suggested that the relatively low cost of Tintoretto's work at the Scuola (just over 2000 ducats overall) is an expression of the artist's desire to realign the confraternity with its charitable aims in the wake of criticisms like Caravia's. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 176. However, there is evidence that in the latter decades of the sixteenth century, the Scuola was making proper provision for the poor. It has been shown that in the second half of the sixteenth century San Rocco spent comparable amounts on items of pomp for processions and alms. Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 128-29.

Scuola Grande di San Rocco was projecting precisely the commitment to raising the glory of Venice, a constancy demanded of them by the Council of Ten. Tintoretto's paintings were for the Scuola part of their service to the state.

The Membership of the Scuola

From its founding, the Scuola di San Rocco was distinguished by a high proportion of foreign born *cittadini* among its brethren. These were the *cittadini per privilegio*.

Hailing from Brescia, Bergamo Ancona and further afield, these men were granted citizenship in Venice as a special privilege for their establishment of permanent residence in the city over several years and as an acknowledgement of their contribution to the civic collective.²⁸ This group included the d'Anna, Balbiani, Cornovi dalla Vecchia, Cuccina, Ferro, Gratarol, Marin, Marucini, Muti, Rota, Troniello and Trincavella families.²⁹ They were a sub-group of *grandi*—members of prominence in the community and in the Scuola—to the *cittadini originari*.

Like the *originari*, these new citizens endeavored to maintain a high profile in the city. Martino d'Anna, for instance, a merchant of Flemish origin, commissioned Pordenone to decorate the façade of his palace on the Grand Canal.³⁰ D'Anna was one of the richest merchants in the city and, judging by the surviving sketch, the elaborate decoration of his palace façade announced in a grand manner his financial position in

²⁷ For a full discussion of the ways in which the *scuole* modeled their artistic taste on that of the state, see Sohm, "San Marco" 46-51.

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of the stronghold of *cittadini per privilegio* at San Rocco, see Maria Elena Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola Grande di San Rocco. Strategie culturali e committenza artistica," *Venezia Cinquecento* 5 (1995): 5-19. Massimi suggests that *cittadini* status was granted to these foreigners in part as "grazie all'esercizio di un'attività redditizia per l'interna collettività." Unfortunately, she does not indicate the types of activity that would have been considered as contributions to the collective. Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 14. For more on the granting of Venetian citizenship to foreigners, see Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 100-01.

²⁹ Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 10.

the lagoon.³¹ Membership and involvement in San Rocco was also an essential status symbol and the *cittadini per privilegio* were keenly involved in confraternity politics, playing repeated roles on the *banca*. Though the holding of office was customarily restricted to *cittadini originari*, on 26 September 1489 the Guardian Grande of San Rocco asked the Council of Ten for a special privilege to open the *banca*, the highest order of Scuola prestige, to *cittadini per privilegio*.³² The surface boundaries between *originari* and new citizens were being blurred.

Though Venice might be the focus of their residences and livelihoods, the homelands of many of these men continued to call their attention. The Cornovi, or Cornovi della Vecchia, is a case in point. Originally from Ancona, the family was well entrenched in Venetian merchant society by the 1560s and was intent on establishing their name in Venice. They possessed an elaborate family shrine at San Salvador, including an altar of Istrian stone attributed to Jacopo Sansovino and Titian's *Annunciation* altarpiece (c. 1560; fig. 221).³³ Like d'Anna, the Cornovi were keen to locate a prominent location and the most celebrated artists when constructing their public monuments. Within the Scuola several Cornovi men held periods in office, including the highest rank of *guardian grande* (Venturin in 1539 and Antonio in 1569).³⁴ Yet despite their high flying Venetian public image, the Cornovi maintained strong connections with their *terra firma* homeland. Extant *decime* (tithe

³⁰ For a sketch of the palace façade decoration, see Jane Martineau and Charles Hope, eds., *The Genius of Venice 1500-1600* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1983) 273, cat. D43.

³¹ The Cuccina family from Bergamo also maintained a prominent palace on the Grand Canal. For more on the Cuccina palace, see Chapter 7.

³² Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 14-15. Massimi includes an alphabetical index of those who held office at San Rocco from 1500 to 1600. Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 109-169.

³³ Antonio Cornovi purchased the family shrine and set in motion the project to decorate it. Antonio intended the tomb for himself and his father, Venturin. *Titian* 318-20, cat. 56. For more on the status symbols of the merchant class, which included a tomb at San Salvador, see Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 15.

records) and *testamenti* of the Cornovi reveal that the family retained some financial roots in Ancona. Pietro Cornovi's will, dated 23 September 1585, notes that he continued to operate two houses and *botteghe* at Ancona and bequeathed a sizable portion of his estate to *hospitale*, monasteries and churches there.³⁵ By supporting local Anconan institutions, Pietro appears to have contradicted a law ratified by the Great Council in 1552, which stated explicitly that *cittadini per privilegio* must put off "their loyalty to every other city."³⁶ Given that their citizenship was a gift in return for their contribution to the commonwealth, the circumstances of families like the Cornovi reveal a latent conflict between public persona and private interests.

Several of these *cittadini per privilegio* were in key positions during the commissioning of Tintoretto to decorate the Sala Superiore. Alvise Cuccina, a future *guardian grande* (1578), and Benedetto Ferro assisted Tintoretto in devising the start of the program in 1575.³⁷ Paolo d'Anna, grandson of Martino and *guardian grande* in 1577, and Benedetto Marucini were two of the three members elected in 1578 to assist Tintoretto in the further development of the program.³⁸ Scholars have proposed that these men had a special commitment to Tintoretto or to his particular style of painting.³⁹ Given that these *cittadini per privilegio* retained a stake in their

³⁴ Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" Index C.

³⁵ ASV, *Testamenti* 165: 814. See also ASV, *Dieci Savi alle Decime in Rialto* (Redecima 1582) 167: 81. At the end of his will, Pietro left the Scuola di San Rocco whatever remained in his estate—"mio Residuo." He also included the heirs of Antonio as recipients. The precise relationship between Pietro and Antonio is uncertain. For a closer study of the family relations of the Cornovi and the interconnections of the various *cittadini per privilegio*, see the forthcoming PhD thesis by Blake DeMaria, Princeton University. For other *cittadini per privilegio* at San Rocco who maintained connections with the mainland, see ASV, *Dieci Savi alle Decime in Rialto* (Redecima 1582) 164: 805 (for Marco Balbiani who maintained a small house and land in Treviso) and 1019 (for Niccolò and Antonio Cuccina who retained land in Bergamo).

³⁶ Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 100-01.

³⁷ Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 44. See also Nichols, *Tintoretto* 177.

³⁸ Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 19-20.

³⁹ Massimi builds on comprehensive documentary research to propose a special affiliation between the San Rocco *cittadini per privilegio* and Tintoretto. Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto" 19-108. Nichols

homelands, perhaps the opportunity to demonstrate service and loyalty to their adopted home by commissioning art like the Venetian *originari* was enough to add momentum to the decorative projects. As the previous section showed, part of the impetus to produce grand public works at the Scuola was the directive of the Council of Ten to show honor to the commonwealth. In supporting continuously over many years a decorative program of painted piety, the *cittadini per privilegio* of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco created a forum in which they could reaffirm the basis on which they were granted their special Venetian privilege.

Conclusion

As the locus of Venetian civic piety, the *scuole* were obliged to show honor to church and state. Though they were criticized for their frivolity by some camps, projects such as Tintoretto's prolonged projects at San Rocco should be viewed as part of their service to the commonwealth. The outsider status of *cittadini per privilegio*, the *confratelli* who characterized the membership of San Rocco, particularly its highest ranking officials, during the period of Tintoretto's commissions, may have put a finer point on the Scuola's obligation. It is within this context that the ceiling cycle emerged.

The Three Principal Ceiling Paintings: An Introduction

Together, the first three paintings constitute a monumental Moses cycle. The central ceiling canvas depicts the story of Numbers 21. Scripture recounts that the Hebrews became impatient with their difficult journey through the desert and "spoke out

proposes that Tintoretto's style of *santa povertà* appealed to the institutional values of these men.

against God and Moses.” Angered by their disloyalty, God sent deadly serpents into their camp. At this, the people confess their sinfulness and ask Moses to intercede for them with Yahweh so that they might be saved. In response, the Lord instructs Moses to “make a fiery serpent and raise it as a standard. Anyone who is bitten and looks at it will survive.” Moses then erects a bronze serpent to save those who will look to it. (Num. 21: 4-9) Tintoretto imagines a highly dramatic event. The base of the scene is a tangled mass of bodies fighting against the attack of the serpents. The semi-nude figures appear to slide down the hillside in a pyramid as they struggle, throwing themselves backward at the lower right. In the distance on the right, a tent from the camp is just visible. To the left, more figures wrestle as one young man attempts to run away from the horror. Above this mountain of bodies and rising to the left a few figures cast in light and set free from the serpents raise their hands in praise. At the very pinnacle of the hill stands the small figure of Moses. His right hand rests on the cross upon which the brazen serpent has been raised and, looking over his shoulder to the mass of people tumbling down the hill, he swings his left arm up as if trying to catch their attention. Above a semi-nude God the Father explodes out of the clouds of heaven supported by an entourage of angels swarming through the sky in a variety of acrobatic angles.

The unity of the Hebrews is presented here as quite literally tightly knit. The steep slope at the center acts like a funnel for the action, achieving the claustrophobic presentation of figures that suggests a large crowd. The postures, limbs and serpents are woven together in an inextricable tangle.⁴⁰ Composed in a range of tones from the

Nichols, *Tintoretto* 178-79.

⁴⁰ Ridolfi, in his description of the painting, noted the artist’s skill in presenting a diversity of figure types within the crowded composition. Ridolfi, *Life* 38.

deeply tanned skin of the turbaned man at the lower right to the grayish pallor of the corpse draped above the women at the lower center, the earthen color palette blends the figures together into an undulating mass of motion. Though the visual presentation of the group was important earlier in the century in the Veneto as well as later on in the work of Jacopo Bassano, the effect of the *Brazen Serpent* is most closely analogous to that achieved in Tintoretto's own *Last Judgement* in the main chapel at the Madonna dell'Orto (fig. 195-96).⁴¹ There the artist portrayed a mass of serpentine bodies emerging out of their deathbeds to meet their maker. But while the action in the *Last Judgement* is ever upwards, the downward thrust of the tumbling figures in the *Brazen Serpent* appears to press the mounting heap of bodies against the very boundaries of the painting. The golden, earthy tones link visually with the wood surround allowing the arching limbs of the painted bodies to merge with the carved decorative surrounds.⁴² Just as the processing figures in the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* appeared to move ever closer to the viewer, the figures struggling against the serpents seem to descend into the real space of the Sala.

Within the density of the image, Tintoretto also integrates genre details. As has been typical of the Venetian and Veneto images discussed in the previous chapters, the *Brazen Serpent* displays a cross-section of humanity. The inclusion of the tent also picks up on the everyday aspect of the scene. By projecting the narrative further into the background, this detail increases the sense of pictorial depth and gives a sense of much wider community than is pictured at the foreground. As he did in the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews*, Tintoretto integrates the genre elements in the *Brazen*

⁴¹ Figure types in the *Brazen Serpent* also rely on those initially designed for the *Last Judgement*, most notably, the screaming upside down figure at the left reproduces the female figure in the same position at the Madonna dell'Orto.

Serpent so that they exist within, rather than stand out from, the narrative.

Nevertheless, it must be said that the everyday details at San Rocco are much more generalized. Whereas the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews* picked up on a specific reference to Venetian life neighboring the Ghetto—the gold hoop earrings—the *Brazen Serpent* avoids any identifiable allusions to contemporary life in or around San Rocco.

The two canvases painted immediately after the *Brazen Serpent* reflect the compositional concerns of the central canvas. The *Fall of Manna* recalls Exodus 16. The Hebrews complain to Moses about their hunger in the desert: in Egypt they had all they could eat. Yahweh responds by sending bread from the heavens. (Exod. 16: 2-4) The Pentateuch recounts that the Hebrews woke up in the morning to find the manna already fallen on the ground. Tintoretto, however, portrays the shower of food described in the Psalms:

[Yahweh] gave orders to the skies above, he opened the sluice-gates of heaven; he rained down manna to feed them, he gave them the wheat of heaven; mere mortals ate the bread of the Mighty, he sent them as much food as they could want. (Psalms 78:23-25)

At San Rocco the manna comes down on the Hebrew camp like a snowstorm. The raking angle on which the scene is set—the intense *di sotto in sù*—projects the fall of manna past the Hebrews and toward the viewer below. Within the scene, the people, depicted in the typical variety of life, gather up the food. Some crawl across the ground while others raise up baskets to catch the manna as it falls. Beneath a canopy semi-nude figures recline as if exhausted by the hunger they have endured. Their dumbfounded expressions at the sight of the miraculous shower of manna mimic the

⁴² Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 33.

naïve appearance of the flock of lambs beside them. Overall, the group is emphasized with less impact than in the *Brazen Serpent*: the people are more dispersed and their gestures more isolated. However, Tintoretto employs a framing element to focus the viewer's attention on the central scene of the group. The tall, twisting figure at the left is complemented by the turning figure of Moses at the right. As both reach upwards and slightly inwards, the scene is compacted. We have seen a similar technique employed by Moretto in his interpretation of the subject for San Giovanni Evangelista, Brescia. There again a figure on the left holds up a basket to the sky while on the right the elongated torso of a woman leans on a stone tablet. Together the figures bind what is otherwise a rather chaotic scene and, as a result, underline the unity of the group. At San Rocco the two framing figures achieve the same effect. However, in slightly angling inwards they also create a visual link from the group, above the canopy to the heavens where the glorified God is visible through a break in the cloud.

The third canvas, the *Water from the Rock*, depicts the point that the Hebrews next complain to Moses, this time of thirst. When Moses appeals to God for help, Yahweh instructs him to strike the Rock of Horeb with his staff. As he does so, water miraculously spouts forth for the people to drink. (Exod. 17: 2-6; Num. 20: 2-11) Tintoretto presents the moment that the water gushes from the rock. As in the *Fall of Manna*, the illusionism of the water pouring down from the rock, the spouting arch, creates the sense that the narrative enters real space. At the center of the composition, Moses strikes the rock face. His body leans in a graceful curve as he looks down to the Israelites below. God the Father hovers above the scene, reclining on a cushion of cloud. The men, women and children of the camp cluster in an arch along the bottom

half of the scene as they raise up pans and urns to catch the water. The torsion of their bodies as they reach projects the excitement of the moment while at the same time it directs the action swiftly toward the upper left. Again, it is a group unified in purpose and feeling. The inclusion of a dog, a cow and lamb refers back to Scripture—the Hebrews complain that both they and their animals are dying of thirst (Num. 20: 4, 11)—and also recalls the type of genre detail that Jacopo Bassano included in his images of the subject. In the distance, the indistinct vision of soldiers on charging horses refers to the battle with the Amalekites, which follows immediately after the miracle of the water from the rock. (Exod. 17: 8-16)

The three monumental ceiling canvases at San Rocco emphasize the group by the knitting together of the figures, the compact composition and the common purpose of the actions of the people. Each painting also incorporates genre details, albeit very generalizing ones. Adding impact to these scenes, the radical *di sotto in sù* rendering creates the sensation of desert miracles entering into the viewer's space.

The Figure of Moses

Moses is represented in each of the three principal ceiling paintings. This is more unusual than it at first appears for although he is typically depicted in scenes of the Fall or Gathering of Manna and the Water from the Rock, he is not always on the monumental scale represented in the Brazen Serpent. For example, neither Michelangelo's *Brazen Serpent* for the Sistine ceiling (fig. 135) nor Bronzino's rendition of the subject for the Chapel of Eleonora (fig. 118) includes the prophet. In both, the bronze snake on the staff—or more specifically on the cross in Bronzino's fresco—is the isolated focus of the composition. As an antetype for the Crucifixion,

the serpent raised on the cross is a sign for salvation. (John 3: 14-15) In the Christian context this symbol needs no further clarification. As a miracle, God worked through Moses—an ordinary human being—to deliver the Hebrews from death. In the Chapel of Eleonora, where the leadership of the duke is implicit, omitting Moses from the scene might have avoided any charge of blasphemy in suggesting that a secular lord like Cosimo was the agent of salvation.⁴³ Whereas Moses activating the fall of manna and the water from the rock made an unproblematic parallel with the good leader lending succor to his people, to picture Moses prompting the salvation of the cross in such a context would have made too strong an association with the powers of God. Nevertheless, Tintoretto includes Moses in his *Brazen Serpent*. The role that the prophet plays in this and the other two major ceiling canvases is new and distinctive to the Scuola.

The figure type of Moses is similar in each of the three central ceiling canvases. He is a mature, bearded man, wearing a pale red tunic that clings to his muscular form. In the *Water from the Rock* and the *Brazen Serpent* he wears an extra cloak that, caught by the wind, billows around his body. This style of Moses is a departure from Tintoretto's earlier interpretation of the figure at the Madonna dell'Orto. There Moses is stripped bare as a sign of his vulnerability and submission, of his casting off of all earthly signifiers. At San Rocco Moses is clothed with the mantle of the leader. While the Hebrews wear simple tunics or, as in the *Brazen Serpent* and the *Fall of Manna*, they are for the most part semi-nude, Moses wears a long gown as a symbol of his favored status in the group. In this way, the San Rocco interpretation of Moses bears some comparison with those images discussed in

⁴³ See Chapter 2.

Chapter 2. In the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican Logge, in Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora and even on the Ducal Palace capital and in the San Marco relief, Moses wears the long robe and cloak of authority. The clothes that he puts on distinguish his earthly role.

Nevertheless, the character of the San Rocco Moses is more complicated than these earlier examples because of his distinctive relationship with God. In other situations that relationship was made explicit. At the Madonna dell'Orto the mirror nudity of God and Moses symbolized the prophet's closeness to Absolute Virtue. In scenes of the handing over of the tablets of the Law the mimicking of the clothes of the Lord and Moses implied that God himself sanctioned the prophet's leader and law-giver roles. At San Rocco, however, there is no obvious comparison between the two figures. Although in the *Water from the Rock* the Lord wears a red gown and blue cloak that resembles Moses' clothes, in both the *Brazen Serpent* and the *Fall of Manna* he has only a long cloth gathered around his lower body. Moses' role as leader of the Hebrews does not, in these images, appear to be programmatically linked with divine authority.

At the same time, though, the dominant presence of God in each of the three paintings indicates that Moses is not the activator of the miracles taking place. In the *Brazen Serpent* Moses is a small figure at the top of the mountain overshadowed by the divine explosion in the sky. In the *Fall of Manna* he is almost unidentifiable, positioned on the far right with back turned, while the manna descends directly from the glorified God at the center of the sky. Even in the *Water from the Rock* where Moses stands at the very center of the composition, he is eclipsed by the enormous figure of God hovering above him on a cloud. This contrasts sharply with central

Italian examples such as at the Vatican Logge where Moses is repeatedly shown as the pivot of action while God, as in the *Water from the Rock* (fig. 169), is in the role of understudy. This is indisputable in Cellini's medal of Clement VII (fig. 122), where the reverse, after Raphael's fresco, completely omits God from the scene. The Mosaic scenes in the Chapel of Eleonora demonstrate the same: the absence of God implies that the power to feed and give drink to the people is located in the man. At San Rocco, however, there is no doubt that this power originates from the Lord.

Yet Moses, as he is portrayed in the three ceiling paintings, must be close to God because he is repeatedly shown surrounded by light.⁴⁴ In the *Water from the Rock* the light takes the form of a golden halo, a symbol of his saintliness as understood in the heritage of the eastern church. In the *Fall of Manna* two rays shine from his head. The Moses of Bronzino's *Appointing of Joshua* (fig. 119), in his military armor and sitting as if on a throne, wore light rays like a crown, signs of power and authority. The Moses of Tintoretto's painting, however, has no regal attributes but he does hold under his right arm a tablet of the Law. Though it is chronologically out of order to assign Moses the tablets at this point, it clarifies the meaning of the light rays for, as tradition stipulated, it was at the renewal of the Law, after Moses had been talking with the Lord, that his faced shined, or, in translation, was horned.⁴⁵ This closeness to God conveyed through light is most prominent in the first painting, the *Brazen Serpent*. There the small figure of Moses at the top of the hill is bathed in white light emanating from the transparent figure descending

⁴⁴ Romanelli has discussed in a general way Tintoretto's employment throughout San Rocco of the theology of light (John 1: 9, 9; 8: 12; 9: 4; 1 John 1: 5). Giandomenico Romanelli, "Tintoretto a San Rocco: committenza, teologia, iconografia," Rossi and Puppi, *Jacopo Tintoretto* 94. See also Romanelli, *Tintoretto* 38.

⁴⁵ For more on the issue of Moses' horns and light rays, see Chapter 2, n. 16.

headlong from the cloud. It is difficult to say for certain who this figure is. Although he resembles the multitude of angels that accompany God on his flight over the scene, it would be unusual for anyone other than the Lord himself to radiate a spiritual light of such intensity. Though there is no known precedent, it is possible that this figure represents the second person of the Trinity, the Son not yet made man.⁴⁶ Certainly, given the crucifix upon which the brazen serpent is raised, it would be appropriate for the Son to be the glorifying force in that place and time. Nevertheless, whether it is the second person of the Trinity or simply an angel, the close proximity that the figure assumes as he casts heavenly illumination on Moses demonstrates again the prophet's intimacy with God.

If the San Rocco Moses-as-leader is characterized by a spiritual closeness with God, he is equally distinguished by his relationship with the Israelites. While at the Madonna dell'Orto Moses was separated from the group, in each of the San Rocco images the prophet is in the midst of the people. In the *Water from the Rock* he is literally the center of the action while in the *Brazen Serpent* and the *Fall of Manna* he is almost lost within the flurry of activity. Chapter 3 noted how Veneto painters earlier in the century tended to place Moses within the group. For instance, in Moretto's *Gathering of Manna* in San Giovanni Evangelista, Brescia (fig. 137) the small, distant figure of Moses is virtually indistinguishable amid the chaotic crowd of Hebrews. In central Italy, if not lost within the group, Moses is often portrayed surrounded by the people, especially during the miracles of the desert. In the Vatican

⁴⁶ The Trinity, although not fully revealed in the Old Testament, was, according to John's Gospel, existent from the beginning of time: "In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." (John 1: 1-2) Old Testament passages, such as Abraham's meeting of the three young men (Gen. 18: 1-15), were understood as veiled references to the Trinity.

Logge the Hebrews cluster behind Moses as he strikes water from the rock (fig. 169) and in the Chapel of Eleonora they gather around his feet (fig. 120). Separating the San Rocco trio from all of these examples is Moses' intense engagement with his people. In each part of the sequence, Moses does not focus on the miracle that takes place; instead he looks back to the people. In the *Brazen Serpent* he twists his body to call back to the figures struggling against the deadly snakes. In the *Water from the Rock* and the *Fall of Manna*, even as the drink pours forth and the food rains from heaven, Moses turns and gazes down to the Hebrews. His concern is with them.

As he establishes the connection with the people, Moses' gesture is in each instance to point. In the central scene this is a dynamic movement: the prophet sweeps his arm toward the raised serpent of bronze, urging the Hebrews to gaze on the symbol of their salvation. A woman with arms outstretched provides the compositional link between the world of suffering below and the small point of hope at the top of the mountain. In the two secondary scenes the significance of the gesture is subtler. It is typical in representations of these subjects to show Moses pointing, especially with his staff. Using the Logge *Water from the Rock* as a case in point again, Moses taps his staff against the rock face like a magic wand, he aims the rod like a tool. At San Rocco, however, Moses' gesture is not to activate the miracles but rather it is a continuation of his attempt to get the attention of the Hebrews. Moses opens his arms wide and with his left hand gestures to the people while the staff in his right hand points to the rock. Tintoretto illustrated this same posture in his earlier Frankfurt *Water from the Rock* (fig. 189). There, amid the block-like portrayal of the group, Moses is already commanding the Hebrews' attention. At San Rocco this action is still in process, calling attention to the spiritual importance of the moment. The

water is flowing, the people are enthusiastically gathering it in jugs but Moses wants them to look: he wants them to not simply satisfy their thirst but to pay attention to rock itself. This motion alludes to St Paul who wrote that the Israelites drank from the spiritual rock, the rock that was Christ. (1 Cor. 10: 4) The action of Moses indicates that he wants the people to acknowledge the source of their spiritual drink. The same is true in the *Fall of Manna*, where again Moses reaches up to the sky. He points not to the miracle itself, the food falling from the sky. Rather he directs the group's attention beyond the material food, above the canopy, which, like the same shelter at the Madonna dell'Orto, obscures the vision of the glory of God. Again, St Paul explained that unless one turns to the Lord the Old Testament is covered in a veil. (2 Cor. 3: 14) Moses points above and beyond the veil, urging the Hebrews to transcend their earthly needs and look to their God and savior.⁴⁷

Moses' gesture in each of the three paintings is a call to witness. He is truly a prophet: one radiant in the spirit who directs others on the way to salvation. Although he is portrayed as a leader, he is a guide of the spirit rather than a man endowed with temporal authority. The identity of the man is not important. Moses is significant because, as the uniting force for the people, he is the trailblazer in the desert of trial.

Iconography

The central ceiling canvases in the Sala Superiore at San Rocco are linked by their concentration on the theme of the desert. Like Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora, which

⁴⁷ De Tolnay suggests that the canopy is an allusion to the canopy of the Temple of Jerusalem Charles De Tolnay, "L'interpretazione dei cicli pittorici del Tintoretto nella Scuola di San Rocco," *Critica d'Arte* 7 (1960): 348. The Gospel of Mark alludes to the transcendence of the old covenant by the Christ when it records that at the death of Jesus "the veil of the Sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom." (Mark 15: 38)

highlights the same three narratives, a strong Eucharistic message is implicit in the grouping. The *Fall of Manna* and the *Water from the Rock* offer direct references to the body and blood (John 6: 31-35; 1 Cor. 10: 4) while the *Brazen Serpent* forms a type for the crucifix—sign of salvation—that would have stood at the altar located below the *Manna*. The secondary canvases support the sacramental character of the three main pictures: the *God the Father Appears to Moses*, the *Pillar of Smoke* and *Jonah and the Whale* (figs. 205-07) grouped around the *Water from the Rock* refer to salvation through baptism; the *Vision of Ezekiel* and *Jacob's Ladder* (figs. 208-09) at either side of the *Brazen Serpent* correspond with Resurrection and Ascension; and the *Sacrifice of Abraham*, *Elijah Fed by the Angel*, *Elisha Multiplies the Bread*, and the *Passover* (figs. 210-13) surrounding the *Fall of Manna* are all types for the Eucharist.⁴⁸ The *Fall of Man* (fig. 204) is the exception that refers to the introduction of sin into the world, setting in motion the work of salvation that culminates in the central canvas.⁴⁹ Even before any wall paintings were installed this set of images would have been appropriate for the Sala Superiore, a space that was used at times to celebrate Mass.

Scholars have already discussed the relationship between the ceiling canvases and the rest of the San Rocco decorative programs, particularly with reference to the New Testament scenes on walls of the Sala Superiore and the *albergo*. Many have considered the installation of the *Brazen Serpent* as the first and central painting in the Sala Superiore to be a natural continuation of the *Crucifixion* (1565) in the adjoining

⁴⁸ De Tolnay, "L'interpretazione" 346-376 and Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 89.

⁴⁹ Giandomenico Romanelli, "Temi biblici nel ciclo del 'teleri' di Tintoretto a San Rocco," *L'Arte e la bibbia: immagine come esegesi biblica*, ed. Timothy Verdon (Settimello: Biblia, 1992) 201. Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 33.

albergo, thus developing a general history of salvation.⁵⁰ However, attempts to compare the cycle with traditional typological correspondences, such as those outlined in the *Biblia Pauperum*, have proved to be an uneasy fit.⁵¹ For example, while the combination of the *Brazen Serpent*, the *Sacrifice of Abraham* and the *Crucifixion* on one of the pages of the *Biblia Pauperum* (fig. 31) matches three pictures on the Sala Superiore ceiling and in the *albergo*, there is no exact correlation for the page of the *Baptism of Christ with Crossing of the Red Sea and Reconnaissance of Canaan* (fig. 29). Obvious inconsistencies like these appear to rule out a thorough iconographic scheme detailed in advance of the decoration of the Sala Superiore and suggest a more organic development of the iconography and more generalizing relationship between ceiling and walls. Given that the *Brazen Serpent* was the first painting produced, it encapsulates the nucleus of an idea that developed in the successive phases of work: the salvation of suffering humanity, prefigured in the Old Testament miracles, born out in the institution of the Sacraments and finally achieved in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.⁵²

Allowing some degree of improvisation in the iconographic planning between project stages, it seems fair to consider the ceiling cycle, especially the three principal paintings, as independent of the New Testament scenes on the walls. As the discussion of the Chapel of Eleonora demonstrated, the desert miracles need not have their typological matches from the New Testament—the Last Supper and the

⁵⁰ Eduard Hüttinger, *Die Bilderzyklen Tintoretto's in der Scuola di San Rocco zu Venedig* (Zürich: Neuen Züricher Zeitung, 1962) 26. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 178.

⁵¹ For the proposed connections with the *Biblia Pauperum*, see De Tolnay, "L'interpretazione" 368-70 and Giandomenico Romanelli, *Tintoretto: La Scuola Grande di San Rocco* (Milan: Electa, 1994) 24-25. See also Romanelli, "Tintoretto a San Rocco" 92 and Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 89-90. Cf. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 180.

⁵² De Tolnay, "L'interpretazione" 346. See also Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 32. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 178.

Crucifixion—present in order to convey their sacramental significance. Likewise the San Rocco ceiling paintings communicated, at least in their initial installation, a complete Eucharistic program on their own.

However, using the Chapel of Eleonora as a point of reference again, it was clear that the choice of the Exodus subject matter was not for purely pious reasons. Chapter 2 demonstrated how Bronzino's handling of the iconography met secular requirements—the glorification of the leadership of Duke Cosimo—in equal measure to the devotional imperatives—the adoration of the Sacraments. In the same way, Tintoretto's distinctive handling suggests another layer of meaning conflated with the central Eucharistic theme. As the previous section showed, the emphasis in San Rocco is not on Moses himself but his role with relation to the people in the desert of trial. It is this peculiarly Venetian, self-effacing prophet in the desert that works in conjunction with the Sacramental core of the cycle.

In order to recognize the meaning of Moses in desert in this context, first we must consider who was responsible for authoring the iconographic cycle. This has a point of some speculation. Opinion has been divided between assigning creative responsibility to an anonymous, scholarly *confratello* and attributing the development of the iconography to Tintoretto himself.⁵³ More recently, Tom Nichols has suggested a plausible compromise between these two positions: a collaboration between Tintoretto and the two brethren, Alvise Cuccina and Benedetto Ferro, assigned to

⁵³ For the theory of the anonymous *confratello*, see Henry Thode, "Kritische Studien über des Meisters Werke," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 27 (1904): 42. For the proposal of Tintoretto as iconographic designer, see De Tolnay, "L'interpretazione" 341. De Tolnay's theory is based on Berliner's archival survey, which highlights Tintoretto's consistency in initiating the various stages of the scheme. The thesis does allow for the possibility that Tintoretto consulted slightly with someone in the Scuola. See also Hüttinger, *Die Bilderzyklen* 25; Romanelli, *Tintoretto* 23; and Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 32.

advise the artist on the subject of the first commission.⁵⁴ In view of the preceding sections of this chapter, the ceiling program would have grown out of a partnership of Tintoretto's interest in artistic innovation and the *confratelli* concerns about service to the state. We have already discussed Tintoretto's contribution to the project: focusing on the group, incorporating genre detail, engaging the viewer via dramatic illusionism and composing Moses as the prophet leader. It now remains to determine what the Scuola of the later sixteenth century would have had invested in such images.

The Old Testament and the Scuola

Public Displays

As discussed in previous sections, all of the *scuole* contributed regularly to the grand processions in Piazza San Marco. Judging by the descriptions in Sanuto's *Diarii*, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco put great effort and investment in these pageants. As part of the Corpus Christi festivities of 1515, the long parade of *confratelli* presented, in addition to multiple *soleri* laden with silver, impressive *tableaux vivants*, including models of the world, ships at sea and scores of nude putti.⁵⁵ However, distinguishing San Rocco most strikingly from its counterparts were the repeated live representations of scenes from the Bible, especially the Old Testament.⁵⁶ Sanuto often recorded these floats in the most general way, such as the simple "demonstration a piedi di l' Testamento vechio" that accompanied the elaborate parade of spectacles at Corpus Christi 1515.⁵⁷ However, where he delved into greater detail, references are made to

⁵⁴ Nichols, *Tintoretto* 177-78.

⁵⁵ Sanuto, *I diarii* 20: 274-75. For an illustration of Corpus Christi procession, see fig. 125.

⁵⁶ Muir, *Civic Ritual* 227. Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 53-54.

⁵⁷ Sanuto, *I diarii* 20: 274-75. For more general references to the San Rocco's Old Testament *tableaux vivants*, see Sanuto, *I diari* 14: 306; 16: 303-04; 18: 271; 25: 437; 27: 405; 30: 281; 36: 369; 41: 414; 50: 374; 58: 315.

the Exodus and, more specifically, to Moses. For example, at the 1517 Corpus Christi event the San Rocco display grew to “4 soleri et cavalli con homeni suso et molti a piedi che indicava li misterii dil Testamento vechio et altri che portavano li 10 comandamenti di la fede.”⁵⁸ The Scuola’s most spectacular recorded treatment of the Old Testament was at the festival of the Madonna on 8 September 1515. Following a wooden sculpture of Saint Roch dressed in gold and another of Saint Zechariah and preceding a *solero* displaying Christ in limbo were “le 12 tribù et la virga de Aron et Moises davanti in zenochioni li deva l’inzenso col turibolo.”⁵⁹ San Rocco is the only *scuola* chronicled in Sanuto’s *Diarii* that maintained this Old Testament specialty in Venice’s civic rituals.

Scholars of the *scuole* and civic ritual have so far been unable to account for the Scuola’s unusual emphasis on the Old Testament.⁶⁰ However, according to Sanuto, scenes such as these brought great honor to San Rocco: “*adeo* fo laudata da tutti.”⁶¹ With praise such as this noted alongside the repeated descriptions of their Old Testament floats, we can surmise that the Scuola had developed something of a reputation in the sixteenth-century for its magnificent representations of the Old Testament. While fulfilling their obligation to give tribute to the commonwealth, the Scuola’s emphasis on the Old Testament brought them distinction and thus played a part in maintaining their social status. The choice of the Moses narratives for the ceiling may well have been an extension of this process. Whatever the case, it seems probable, as Brian Pullan has suggested, that the inspiration for the subject matter of

⁵⁸ Sanuto, *I diarii* 24: 347.

⁵⁹ Sanuto, *I diarii* 21: 46-47.

⁶⁰ Both Muir and Pullan note the Scuola’s peculiar interest in the Old Testament but neither proposes a motive for it. Muir, *Civic Ritual* 227. Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 53-54.

⁶¹ Sanuto, *I diarii* 18: 271.

the Sala Superiore canvases emerged from the Scuola's already deep-seated interest in the Old Testament.⁶²

Images Owned by the Confratelli

While the image of Moses played a role in the public face of the Scuola, there is some evidence to suggest that it also figured in the private life of some of the *confratelli*. At least one of the San Rocco brethren had an image of Moses in his home. The death inventory of 1585 for Pietro Cornovi, mentioned earlier for his financial ties to Ancona, indicates that that among more conventional images of Christ and the saints, he was also the owner of a large image of Moses: “uno quadro grande senza for'to de Moyse.”⁶³ While registers such as this are spare in their descriptions, entries for pictures tend to follow a formula. For example, “un ritratto” is used to indicate a portrait of contemporary figure. “Un quadro,” unless specified otherwise (e.g. “un quadro dell'istoria”), is the common lead for an entry of a religious image of a single figure. Therefore, its context in the inventory implies that Pietro's picture was a devotional image of the Moses.

Devotional images in the home were, of course, unexceptional. Most death inventories list numerous examples of such paintings. Representations of Christ and the Madonna are frequently recorded along with a whole catalogue of saints, especially St. Sebastian, St. Roch, St. Jerome and St. John. Occasionally even a Judith or King David are listed in the inventories. However, Cornovi's painting is the only

⁶² Pullan, *Rich and Poor* 53-54.

⁶³ ASV, *Cancellaria Inferiore Miscellanea Notai Diversi* 43.

Moses logged from 1497-1630.⁶⁴ It would seem that the private ownership of a devotional painting of Moses was unique in sixteenth-century Venice.

The Cornovi made another allusion to Moses in Titian's *Annunciation* altarpiece (fig. 221) commissioned for their family shrine at San Salvador. The main image depicts an eruption of putti as the dove of the Holy Spirit descends on the serene Virgin met by the reverent Archangel Gabriel. Inserted unobtrusively at the lower right, below the glass vase of flame-like flowers, is the inscription *ignis ardens non comburens*: like Moses' bush that burned but was not consumed, Mary conceived but remained a virgin.⁶⁵ Unlike Pietro's unique *Moses*, this was a standard typology. However, in the context of the Cornovi it indicates that again Moses was on their mind.

Conclusion

The Scuola Grande di San Rocco appears to have had a particular long-standing interest in the Old Testament. In their public life their processional representations of Moses helped to win them honor and prestige. In the private sphere of the *confratelli*, at home and in family commissions, there is evidence that Moses played a distinctive role as well. In the absence of extant supporting data, it is impossible to say for certain why the Old Testament and Moses in particular were of especial importance to the San Rocco brethren. Perhaps, given that the Scuola was a comparatively new institution in Venice, founded only in the late fifteenth century, the focus—particularly the public focus—on the Old Testament was an attempt to affiliate San

⁶⁴ ASV, *Cancellaria Inferiore Miscellanea Notai Diversi* 34-45.

⁶⁵ For more on the burning bush as antetype for the virgin birth, see Chapter 4, n. 75.

Rocco with the oldest foundations of the city, the Byzantine past.⁶⁶ As we have seen, this was a priority when many of the *confratelli* were new citizens. A manifest connection with the deepest roots of Venice—paraded through Piazza San Marco, no less—would have certainly been to their own personal advantage as well.

The Plague

Tintoretto's initiation of the ceiling program for the Sala Superiore coincided with one of worst outbursts of plague in the history of Venice. The pestilence of 1575-77 devastated the city, taking the lives of about twenty-five percent of the population.⁶⁷ It disrupted life and trade and forced whole sections of the city to close down at a time.⁶⁸ Under the patronage of Saint Roch, the Scuola was, of course, a locus of attention for those suffering at the time. Naturally, the *Brazen Serpent*, the first and central image of the ceiling cycle, has been interpreted in conjunction with this deadly outbreak as a reflection of the Scuola's charitable concerns for corporal relief, especially their obligation to care for the sick.⁶⁹ This section will consider more specifically the way in which Tintoretto's composition relates to the Venetian experience of the plague and propose the reason that Moses was an appropriate emblem for the Scuola at that time.

⁶⁶ For the Old Testament and the origins of Venice, see Chapter 1.

⁶⁷ For a summary history of the plague, see Paolo Preto, "Le grandi pesti dell'età moderna: 1575-77 e 1630-31," *Venezia e la peste* 123-26.

⁶⁸ *Venezia e la peste* 130, cat. S99.

⁶⁹ Michael Levey, "Tintoretto and the Theme of Miraculous Intervention," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 113 (1965): 718. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 182-83. Antonio Niero, "La Scuola di San Rocco," *Venezia e la peste* 329. Romanelli, *Tintoretto* 31. Paola Rossi, "Venezia, la peste e le sue immagini," *Arte Veneta* 34 (1980): 258. Thode, "Kritische Studien" 27, 35.

Emphasis on the Collective

After a series of closely timed disasters—the burning of the arsenal (1569), famine (1569-70) and ongoing war with the Turks—the pestilence was the ultimate fall from grace for Venice. Various types of bizarre occurrences were identified in hindsight as portents for the plague—a “monstrous” birth of a Jew in the Ghetto, the corrosion of cittadini wells by *acqua alta*, an eclipse of the moon.⁷⁰ However, the extent of the devastation instigated Venetian introspection: what had they done to deserve such misfortune? In his history of Venice published in the following decade, Natale Conti explains that initially, when the plague spread through the homes of the plebeians, it was considered simply bad luck, *sinistra fortuna*.⁷¹ However, as disaster struck at the more elevated sectors of society, the root cause became clear:

Ma quando penetrò ella nelle sale de i Patricii, e ne i palagi de i più potenti, nè più giouauano gli humani isperimenti: incominciarono gli huomini à sentire non mediocre spauento; e giudicare quella peste non altronde, che dalla diuina prouidenza per i peccati de' mortali auuenire.⁷²

The plague was divine retribution for the sins of the people and, as Paolo Preto has comprehensively shown, the documents stress again and again that the sin was collective: “ira causata dai nostri peccati.”⁷³

As we have already seen, Tintoretto’s *Brazen Serpent* emphasized the group in its portrayal of a mass of bodies, of flesh writhing in an effort to free itself from the

⁷⁰ Paolo Preto, *Peste e società a Venezia nel 1576*, Studi e testi veneziani 7 (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1978) 60-61.

⁷¹ “Ora mentre la violenza del male infuriò solo contra l’ignobil volgo, e vil popolaccio, e contra la pouertà, quasi proprio di tutte le miserie bersaglio; più comportabile parue la sinistra fortuna.” Natale Conti, *Delle historie de’ suoi tempi*, trans. Giovan Carlo Saraceni, vol. 2 (Venice, 1589) 315r.

⁷² Conti, *Delle historie* 315r.

⁷³ H. Donzellini, *Discorso nobilissimo e dottissimo preservativo et curativo della peste* (Venice, 1577), qtd. in Preto, *Peste* 61-63.

slippery embrace of the dragon-like snakes. Moreover, the interwoven effect of the figures—the wave-like undulation of tone and sinuous form—suggests forcefully the idea of the people bound together in their sin and punishment, their collectivity. On the one hand, like the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews*, the San Rocco *Brazen Serpent* exhibits a sophisticated turn on the Venetian and Veneto group images of earlier in the century. Additionally, however, this interconnection of bodies sets the painting apart from the central Italian interpretations of the subject, such as Michelangelo's rendition for the Sistine ceiling (fig. 135) and Bronzino's Michelangesque fresco for the Chapel of Eleonora (fig. 118). Focusing on the Sistine Chapel example, there again a mass of humanity fights to release itself from the grasp of deadly snakes. However, even as the bodies writhe together, the individuality of their figures is maintained. The juxtaposition of opposing hues helps to isolate bodies and body parts, the figures fitting together like independent puzzle pieces. Even if we accept that Tintoretto's *Brazen Serpent* displays the influence by Michelangelo's heroic figure types, his binding of the figures through the choreography of earthy flesh evokes collectivity, and thus the contemporary discourse on the cause of the plague.⁷⁴

Furthermore, this materialization of the idea of the collective is made palpable for the viewer by the intense illusionism described earlier. The representation of the interwoven group threatens to engulf the beholder below, the narrative visually washing over him. The drama of the entangled bodies seemingly plunges down beyond the canvas creating a continuum between fictive and real space. In terms of sixteenth-century Venetian painting, Tintoretto is bringing to culmination a type of "visual rhetoric" first explored by Titian. The cycle of 1542-44 for the Church of

⁷⁴ For Tintoretto's derivation of figure type from Michelangelo, see De Tolnay, "L'interpretazione"

Santo Spirito in Isola, now in the Church of Santa Maria della Salute, captures the imagination of the spectator in its dramatic illusionism.⁷⁵ The intense foreshortening of the three main paintings—*Cain and Abel*, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, and *David and Goliath* (fig. 220)—appears to condense the distance between narrative scene and the eye of the viewer. In the *David*, for instance, the hefty, decapitated body of Goliath threatens to slide down and out through the pictorial space. At the same time the exaggerated thrust of David's prayerful hands ushers the beholder up towards heaven. The engagement with the viewer is taken further in Titian's planar *Transfiguration* (fig. 222) of the early 1560s at San Salvador. As the Apostles fall over backwards in surprise, the silhouetted arm of the figure on the right appears to break through the threshold of painted and real space, inviting the spectator to act as another of the disciples bowled over at the sight of the transfigured Christ. The acrobatic figures of Tintoretto's own canvases exploit this device still further. In the *Miracle of the Slave* (fig. 186) of 1548, for instance, the radical foreshortening of Saint Mark rocketing into the scene from a space somewhere just above the beholder's head and the crowd gathered in a semi-circle around the body of the slave compels the viewer to enter into the pictorial fiction. As Michael Levey notes, "everything is done to involve the spectator in the scene, to make him feel—as he completes the crowd by standing at the fourth side—that he is present in Alexandria."⁷⁶ When confronted by the *Brazen Serpent*, however, the spectator's engagement with the narrative is not merely as

342. Cf. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 184.

⁷⁵ For more on the program, see Kahr, "Titian's Old Testament Cycle."

⁷⁶ Levey, "Miraculous Intervention," 709, 713

another onlooker: he becomes part of the surge of bodies and thus implicated in the collective of sin and punishment.⁷⁷

Just as the Venetians considered the cause of the plague to be collective guilt, so too they believed that their redemption would be won by collective penance. Preto notes how Carlo Borromeo's teaching on deliverance from pestilence was influential in Venice, especially his forceful proclamations that because the whole community sinned together, the remission of sin must be communal as well.⁷⁸ This corporate ethos conformed to the Myth of the republic. The question was, however, who would lead the people to their salvation?

The Role of the Doge

The Old Testament records numerous incidents where the collective sins of the people of Israel instigate the wrath of God, particularly during the time of King David. At first Yahweh's anger is aroused against the Israelites and he incites David to take a census of the people of Israel and Judah. However after the census is taken, David admits that he was motivated by the sin of pride. Yahweh offers David for punishment three choices: three years of famine, three months at war or three days of plague. David chooses plague and the whole of the Israelites suffer. It is only when David builds an altar to Yahweh that the Israelites are shown pity and the plague is lifted. (2 Sam. 24; 1 Chron. 21)

⁷⁷ For more on sixteenth-century developments in narrative painting that demand the active engagement with the spectator, see John Shearman, *Only Connect...Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, Bollingen 35 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992) especially chapters 1, 2 and 5.

⁷⁸ Preto, *Peste* 77-78.

In the middle years of the 1570s, numerous writers drew parallels between the suffering of the Israelites and the misery of the Venetians. For example, Antonio Glisente, in his treatise on the causes and cures of the plague, noted that

La onde potiamo dire noi medesimi essere la causa pestilentiale come David Re delli Hebrei, quando per il peccato di noverare il popolo fu cagione della pestilential. Et si come noi medesimi siamo causa che la Divina Maestà ci mandi la peste, in noi medesimi sta anco il mitigare la sua ira perché ogni volta che lasceremo il peccato et che a guisa di David si emenderemo a sua misericordia infinita farà cessare la peste.⁷⁹

As David sinned and appealed to God's mercy, so must the Venetians.

David's role in imploring the Lord on behalf of his suffering people gained especial symbolic importance in relation to the doge. The same Biblical story was recounted at Doge Alvise Mocenigo's commission to build the Church of the Redentore:

Che affligendo il Signor Dio li populi per li peccati commessè contra sua Diuina Maestà si come si deue credere, che faccia hora questa città, et leggessi nelle sacre scritture di hauer fatto per li peccati commessi dal Re David nel populo Isdraelitico, facendone morir una gran parte di esso et non uolendo prima placarsi, che fusse pregato da esso Re David a conuertire il suo giusto flagello in se medesimo, che haueua peccato; et insieme honorato, et adorato publicamente sopra l'altar eretto da lui per conselgio di Gad Profeta; essortaua

⁷⁹ Antonio Glisente, *Trattato del reggimento del vivere et delle alter cose che devono usare gli huomeni per preservarsi sani nelli tempi pestilenti continuato dalla cognitione delle cause che producono la peste* (Venice, 1576), qtd. in Preto, *Peste* 184. For more documents that compare Venice with the time of David, see Preto, *Peste* 167, 181; and on the wrath of God in Old Testament times in general, see Preto, *Peste* 178-79.

sua Serenità però ogn'uno con tal esempio a far penitenza de suoi peccati, et con puro cori conuertirsi a dimandar perdono al Sig.r Dio, lo qual humilmente supplicaua a perdonar a questo populo, et a uoler commandar all'Angello percutiente, che hormai cessasse la mano sua da tanta mortalità; et con l'istesso ese'pio del Re David sudetto, che parole del quale si stimaua sua Ser.tà indegna di douer dire che conuertisse in se medesimo questo flagello, per espiation della sua giusta tra prometteua di erigger per publico decreto una chiesa, intitolandola dal nome del REDENTORE con obbligo per se, et suoi successori di uisitarla in quello istesso giorno, nel qual saria sta dechiarito et publicato questa città libera dal contagio presente. (8 September 1576)⁸⁰

Like King David, Doge Alvise Mocenigo acts as an intercessor with God for his people.⁸¹ He—one man—takes on all the guilt himself, begs for forgiveness and then builds the altar as penance. The conflation of the leadership and sacral roles is reminiscent of the papal analogies with Moses. Just as the Sistine Chapel walls referred to the institution of the papacy, so too the insistence that Mocenigo's successors will visit the Redentore each year emphasizes the ducal institution and relieves the present doge from un-Venetian self-aggrandizement.⁸² Nevertheless, the emphasis of the analogy with David is on the power of the actions of one man—or at least, a one-man institution—to save the people.

⁸⁰ ASV, Ceremoniale Registri I, 48v. Also ASV, Ceremoniale Registri II, 26v.

⁸¹ For more on Doge Alvise Mocenigo and the analogy with King David, see Tracy Cooper, "The Trials of David: Triumph and Crisis in the Imagery of Doge Alvise I Mocenigo (1570-1577)," *Center 18: Record of Activities and Research Reports June 1997-May 1998* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1998) 64.

⁸² For the annual procession to the Redentore, see Muir, *Civic Ritual* 214, 216.

The Role of the Scuola

With the plague raging throughout the city, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco was offered a new and important way to serve the state. The Senate voted to establish a new *andata*, a ducal procession, on the day of the Assumption of the Virgin and the feast day of Saint Roch to the Church of San Rocco. The doge, accompanied by the Signoria, the Senate and other diplomats, traveled along the Grand Canal from the Piazza. At the San Tomà traghetto stop the *guardian grande* of the Scuola would meet the convoy and lead them to the church where they would celebrate Mass. Following the veneration of relics, the entire company would go to the Sala Superiore for refreshments. On 16 August 1578, just as the ceiling decoration of the Sala Superiore was being completed, the Scuola hosted the first of the new *andata*.⁸³

The role of San Rocco in the *andata* underlines again its responsibilities to the Venetian commonwealth. The charitable aims of the Scuola transcended relief from corporal suffering to encompass pageantry and leading the collective offering of glory to God. This was especially true during a time of plague. While the doge, as a King David like figure, took everything upon himself and, set apart from the people, made a personal appeal to the Lord, the Scuola always acted in the midst of the people, part of the collective but with the special obligation of leading the people back again and again to God.

In this light, the role of Moses in the ceiling canvases of the Sala Superiore becomes more precise. He serves the people in the first instance by tending to their bodily needs, enacting God's miracles of bread from heaven, water from the rock and

⁸³ For a description of the 1578 procession, see ASV, Ceremoniale Registri I, 71r. See also ASV, Ceremoniale Registri II, 54v. For later illustrations of the feastday of San Rocco, see figs. 112 and 121. For a near contemporary illustration of another of *andate*, see fig. 124.

physical healing. However, as Tintoretto portrays, his service is not restricted to the restoration of the body. In each of the canvases he looks to the people, gathers them up and points fervently to the source of their redemption. The Moses of these pictures like the same figure of the Madonna dell'Orto is a guide to higher things, a man in closer contact with the spiritual. However, while in the *Moses at Mount Sinai* he led by example, at one remove from the Hebrews, at San Rocco, he moves among them, leading as the servant of the Chosen People of God. Unlike King David, the identity of Moses is not the central point of significance. The self-effacing prophet remains with his people, a shining light in the midst of their sin and punishment.

In seeking their salvation, Moses acts out of commitment to serving the group, and simultaneously, to serve God. Moses in this context embodies the aspirations of the *confratelli* of San Rocco.

Conclusion

Commissioning the *Brazen Serpent* as the first and central painting of the ceiling cycle, the San Rocco brethren were not simply making a thematic reference to the plague that gripped the city in the period or to their temporal responsibility as charity givers. More specifically, the image as rendered by Tintoretto reflects both the Venetian experience of the plague as collective punishment for collective sin and the fundamental duty of the Scuola to care for souls. Though at this time King David embodied the combined leadership and sacral qualities of the doge, Moses personified the call to service that characterized the confraternity. The body motion and the gaze of Moses betray his character: he is the unifying force of the collective. He unites the people of Israel just as the Scuola was a unifying force for the Venetians. Through the

Masses for the dead, the processions in Piazza San Marco and the annual *andata*, the *confratelli*, like Moses, pointed beyond the material and attempted to focus the people on the spiritual. Furthermore, the dramatic illusionism of the canvases brings the viewer—the San Rocco brother—seemingly into the space of the visual narrative, adding impact and immediacy to the symbolism. The imperatives of service were not merely reflected in the paintings but animated in the great meeting hall of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco.

Conclusion

Tintoretto's three central ceiling canvases for the Sala Superiore of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco call attention to the confraternity's aim to tend to the temporal and the spiritual needs of the people of Venice. The subject matter of the images refers directly to the standard themes of the Eucharist and salvation through the Cross. Simultaneously, the image of the *Brazen Serpent* at the center suggests the devastating plague of 1575-77 and the responsibilities of the Scuola under the patronage of Saint Roch to care for the victims of this illness. Above all, Tintoretto's handling of the subjects at that particular time brought to a fine point the emphasis on a time of trial and need for collective service to state and God. Like the painting in the main chapel of the Madonna dell'Orto, Tintoretto reworked again the understanding of Moses. By refashioning the understanding of the prophet-leader into a self-effacing servant working for the salvation of the group, the artist has created a model that is expressly geared to the concerns of the Scuola di San Rocco. Given the demographic of the membership and particularly the chief hierarchy of the confraternity, the expression of service and loyalty to Venice was especially appropriate.

At the start of this chapter it was noted that the Sala Superiore ceiling was the first monumental Moses cycle in Venice since the San Marco atrium. The thirteenth-century mosaics focused on the early life of Moses but located his biography at the end of a sequence of Old Testament narratives. At the entrance to the main church, the Moses cupola is the culmination of an accumulation of figures and narratives pointing to the salvation of Christ. Similarly, the San Rocco cycle places Moses in the primary position of leading to communion with God. However, rather than one of a number of saints and prophets marching seamlessly toward Paradise, the sixteenth-century images emphasize the difficult journey through the desert on the way to the Promised Land. Focusing on the place of the trial of the will the *Brazen Serpent*, the *Fall of Manna* and the *Water from the Rock* are not simply types for the New Testament scenes on the walls below but are reminders of the preparation of body and spirit that needs to take place before communion with the Lord takes place.

CHAPTER 6

Printed Book Illustration and the San Giorgio Maggiore *Miracle of Manna*

Introduction

The previous chapters have all considered the representation of Moses in Venice from small *cassone* paintings to the monumental cycles of Tintoretto. Yet large-scale paintings were not the only vehicle for the representation of the prophet. In considering the representation of Moses, these chapters have touched on the topic of book illustration; in particular, the typological references in the *Biblia Pauperum* have been mentioned briefly as general sources for large-scale programs. Indeed, the innovation of the illustrated printed Bible from the late fifteenth century through the sixteenth century provides one of the most fertile sources in Venice for visual and literal representations of Moses and the Exodus stories. This chapter will therefore explore these neglected prints as a contrast to the city's monumental painted imagery of the prophet. By analyzing the production, function and reading process of the illustrated printed page, we can see how this medium contributed to the development of the meaning of Moses in Venice and speculate a new source for Tintoretto's San Giorgio Maggiore *Miracle of the Manna* (figs. 216-17).

Review of the Literature

By its very nature, the illustrated printed book of the Renaissance demands an interdisciplinary study. However, most analyses of the subject are isolated behind the rigid boundaries of individual disciplines. Historical studies of publishers, printers and editors tend to focus on the social position of printing and the print industry in the

period, addressing issues such as censorship, literacy, developments in technology, distribution and intra-industry competition.¹ Comprehensive bibliographies and catalogues were produced from early in the last century.² In the realm of art history, Arthur M. Hind's 1935 *An Introduction to the History of Woodcut* remains the handbook to the history of early book illustration.³ More recently, crossover from the field of hand-produced manuscripts, such as Lilian Armstrong's work on hand-illuminated printed illustrations, has addressed more subtle questions about production.⁴ In most cases, though, book illustration receives only a cursory mention in the broader discussion of single-leaf printing. For example, David Landau and Peter Parshall's *The Renaissance Print*, a comprehensive study of the whole of the print medium, discusses book illustration only in its first generation as part of the

¹ The classic text is S.H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 1955 (London: British Library, 1996). For studies focused particularly on the Renaissance, see Grendler, *Roman Inquisition*; Rudolf Hirsch, *Printing, Selling and Reading 1450-1550* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967); Martin Lowry, *Nicolas Jensen and the Rise of Venetian Publishing in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979); Susan Noakes, "The Development of the Book Market in Late Quattrocento Italy: Printers' Failures and the Role of the Middleman," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 11 (1981): 23-55; Brian Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: The Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). For complete bibliography on the subject, see Caroline Karpinski, *Italian Printmaking Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: An Annotated Bibliography* (Boston: Reference Publications in Art History, 1987).

² V. Maséna, Prince d'Essling, *Les livres à figures Vénitiens de la fin du Xv^e siècle et du commencement du XVI^e*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1907-14). Max Sander, *Le livre à figures italien depuis 1467 jusqu'à 1530*, 6 vols. (Milan: Hoepli, 1942). See also Ruth Mortimer, comp., *Harvard College Library Department of Printing and Graphic Arts Catalogue of Books and Manuscripts: Italian Sixteenth-Century Books*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974); *The Illustrated Bartsch* (New York: Abaris, 1978-); Paul Kristeller, *Kupferstich und Holzschnitt in vier Jahrhunderten* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1905); and Friedrich Lippmann, *Der italienische Holzschnitt im XV Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Grote'sche, 1885).

³ Arthur M. Hind, *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut with a Detailed Survey of Work Done in the Fifteenth Century*, 2 vols., 1935 (New York: Dover, 1963).

⁴ Lilian Armstrong, "The Hand-Illumination of Printed Books in Italy 1465-1515," *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination 1450-1550*, ed. Jonathan J. G. Alexander (Munich: Prestel, 1994) 35-47. and "The Impact of Printing on Miniaturists in Venice after 1469," *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books, circa 1450-1520*, ed. Sandra Hindman (Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1991) 174-202.

wider development of the woodcut trade.⁵ In fact, though about a third of all books printed before 1500 were illustrated, only the enigmatic *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499, Aldus Manutius) has received continued scholarly attention.⁶ Art historians debate its influence on iconography and style. Historians of print consider its position in the book market. Students of literature ponder its unusual turns of phrase.⁷ Yet we still lack a study that deals with the early printed illustrated book as an integrated whole: as both a material object and a repository of verbal and visual ideas.⁸ The following sections attempt to bridge this gap by exploring on the one hand the dissemination of printed illustrated Bibles in Venice and the implications of distribution, and, on the other hand, the way understandings of Moses may have been generated through the reading process.

The Illustrated Book

Though the woodcut had been available from the 1470s in Italy, many of the early printed books were illustrated by hand-painting or by a hand-stamped woodblock (called a *stampiglia*).⁹ By the end of the 1480s, however, the Italian printing industry

⁵ David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print 1470-1550* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994) 33-42. See also, David Landau, "Printmaking in Venice and the Veneto," Martineau and Hope, *Genius of Venice* 303-305.

⁶ For the statistic on early-illustrated printed books, see Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years* 71. According to the Sander's catalogue, no less than four hundred illustrated books were published in the final decade of the fifteenth century in Venice. Liane Lefaivre, *Leon Battista Alberti's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1997) 14.

⁷ For a review of literature on the *Hypnerotomachia*, see Lefaivre, *Hypernotomachia Poliphili* 10-15. See also *Word and Image* 14 (1998), which is devoted to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, covering topics as diverse as experiencing gardens to the relationship with Renaissance Egyptology.

⁸ This point has been raised in the past. See Michael Camille, "Opening the Book," rev. of *The Last Flowering: French Painting in Manuscripts 1420-1530 from American Collections*, by John Plummer and Gregory Clark, *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*, by Robert G. Calkins, *The Hastings Hours*, and *The Early Illustrated Book: Essays in Honor of Lessing J. Rosenwald*, ed. Sandra Hindman. *Art History* 7 (1984): 509. For an attempt to address this issue in the form of an exhibition, see Sandra Hindman and James Douglas Farquhar, *Pen to Press: Illustrated Manuscripts and Printed Books in the First Century of Printing* (College Park: Art Dept, U Maryland, 1977) 3.

⁹ Armstrong, "Hand-Illumination" 45. Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 33.

was using movable woodcuts in earnest. Unlike other forms of illustration, the virtue of the woodcut was that it could be printed simultaneously with the text: both woodcut and type characters could be inserted into the same print form and be printed in the same press.¹⁰ Therefore, the image could potentially appear anywhere within the textual arrangement, offering greater flexibility of text-image layout. As a result, it was the woodcut medium that would most strongly characterize illustrated book making into and throughout the sixteenth century.

A collective of craftsmen and traders were involved in the production of woodcuts. Designers, cutters, printers and publishers were all necessary to move the block from manufacture to print to sale.¹¹ Though the earliest designers and cutters were manuscript illuminators, who would sell or rent their blocks to publishers, by the end of the fifteenth century woodcut production became a specialized skill.¹² At this point, the printer gained ownership and control of the blocks, choosing designers, picking pictures and text, and applying for copyrights.¹³

Though it is unclear how much division of labor, if any at all, there was between designer and cutter in the early years of printed illustration, growing competition and changes in the print industry by the late fifteenth century seem to have led to the division of these two tasks.¹⁴ Certainly by the sixteenth century working relationships were developing between designers and cutters in the field of single-leaf printmaking, as for example Titian's brief relationship with Ugo da Carpi

¹⁰ In contrast to the simplicity of printing with the woodcut, the copperplate engraving required the great pressure of the cylinder printing press and had to be printed separately from the accompanying text. Roger Chartier, *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity, 1989) 5-6.

¹¹ Hind, *History of Woodcut* 2: 467-468. Landau, "Printmaking" 303.

¹² Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 36.

¹³ By contrast, engravers continued to exercise control over illustrations made from copperplate engravings. Chartier, *Culture of Print* 6. Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 49, 300.

(c. 1515-18).¹⁵ The increasing fluency of block design and technical execution suggest that the division of specialized labor eventually became the standard practice in book printing as well. However, the anonymity of the craftsmen of book illustration has made it impossible to identify any particular relationships in this sector of printmaking.

At no point in this period, however, did book illustration achieve the respected status of other art forms. This is due partly because, by and large, the stylistic quality and the technical accomplishment of fifteenth-century prints are quite low. The uneasy shift in industry from the illuminators to a specialized trade may account for this.¹⁶ However, the wide dispersal of individual blocks throughout the first century of printings makes it clear that the illustrations were not especially valuable in themselves as works of art. Woodcuts were regularly sold across Europe, bringing, for example, blocks cut in Paris to be used by printers in Venice. As a result of these movements, sets became fragmented and were mixed and matched at the printers without regard to style.¹⁷ No matter if their narratives were sacred or secular, illustrations would be used and reused in a wide variety of literary contexts as long as the image captured the essence of the text it accompanied. As Landau and Parshall note, not even all copies of the same edition of a book would necessarily contain the same illustrations, the same number of them or the same combinations.¹⁸

Unaware of the eventual destination of the illustrations, the designers and carvers produced their woodcuts for a potentially wide, undefined audience. Indeed,

¹⁴ Hind, *History of Woodcut* 2: 468. Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 34, 38.

¹⁵ The relationship between Titian and Ugo ended when the cutter moved to Rome. Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 150.

¹⁶ Lefaivre, *Leon Battista Alberti* 15.

¹⁷ William Ivins, "Some Venetian Renaissance Woodcut Books," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum* 29 (1934): 49. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years* 71.

the open market, rather than the individual commission, was the aim of the Venetian printer and publisher.¹⁹ While we might imagine that an early Bible with abundant illustration was intended for an elite clientele, it has been shown that books of all sorts were within the economic reach of a wide sector of the Renaissance populace.

Armstrong has discovered evidence of the coats of arms of various Venetian nobility and *cittadini* in early printed books, indicating that ownership of decorated Venetian incunables was widespread and not concentrated in an exclusive group of collectors.²⁰

With increased competition between printers later in the sixteenth century, books tended to be aimed at an ever-broader public.²¹ In fact, it has been suggested that the early vernacular Bibles were illustrated not to raise the price of books but rather to earn wider appeal.²²

Within this broad market the question of literacy plays a part. Studies of early print history cite again and again the difficulty in determining literacy trends in the sixteenth century. However, as Rudolf Hirsch notes, reading even before the advent of printing was probably more widespread than is commonly accepted, with some degree of literacy infiltrating all ranks of society.²³ Furthermore, Susan Noakes has proposed that by the late fifteenth century in Italy much of the middle-class was educated and reading.²⁴ With reference to illustrated Bibles, however, the ability to read may not have been a pre-requisite for purchase. In households where some of the inhabitants

¹⁸ Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 36.

¹⁹ Armstrong, "Impact of Printing" 189.

²⁰ Armstrong, "Hand-Illumination" 34.

²¹ Richardson, *Print Culture* 91.

²² M.H. Black, "The Printed Bible," *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3, ed. S.L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1963) 423. Black cites the preface to a 1510 French Bible that suggests that the vernacular translation was meant to provide an "honest pastime," a way to shun idleness, for the lay owner. Furthermore, he notes that no Vulgate except the *Glossa Ordinaria* had illustrations before 1511.

²³ Hirsch, *Printing* esp. Chapter 8 "Printing and Reading."

were illiterate, images offered an alternative access to the Scriptures. Therefore, with cost and literacy not necessarily such constraining forces, the distribution of printed and illustrated Bibles might have been quite wide in Venice.

From start to finish, from production to reception, the woodcut illustration touched a wide and potentially socially diverse audience. In some sense, the book illustrations studied in this chapter form what might be termed the “popular tradition” of Moses in sixteenth-century Venice. In this case, “popular” implies no social connotation. Rather, the term defines images that were diffuse and shared; images that enjoyed a wide currency; images that were mass reproduced and were for the most part inexpensive; and images that were not constrained by the limitations of social hierarchy. These works comprise a popular body of public understanding of Moses.

The Bibles

All of the illustrations discussed in this chapter come from Bibles printed in Venice in the sixteenth century. As far as is known, these illustrations and their noted variants comprise the only printed book illustrations of the Moses stories from the period that may still be found today in the Biblioteca Marciana, the Museo Correr and the Fondazione Cini. The exceptions, which will not be discussed here, are the rough illustrations in the *Fioretti della Bibbia* printed by Francesco Bindoni in 1523. These are for the most part scaled down versions of the illustrations found in the full-scale Bibles printed by the Bindoni in the period.²⁵

²⁴ Noakes, “Book Market” 36.

²⁵ *El fiore de tutta la Bibbia hystoriato...* (Venice: Francesco Bindoni, 1523). Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 164.

Two selections of woodcuts studied here accompany Niccolò Malermi's vernacular translation of the Bible. Malermi's Italian translation of the scriptures was first published in Venice in 1471 by Wendelin von Speyer.²⁶ The first illustrated edition was published in 1490 by Giovanni Ragazzo for Lucantonio de Giunta.²⁷ A second illustrated version appeared in 1493, printed by Guglielmo de Monteferrato.²⁸ Though the 1493 edition was never reprinted, the Giunta Bible went through more than ten editions in the next forty years and provided the virtual template of text-image layout for many Bibles printed in Venice throughout the sixteenth century.²⁹

The Giunta 1490 Bible is a medium-sized folio printed in two columns. Three hundred and eighty-seven woodcut illustrations, some repeated, appear throughout the text. Two hundred and ten of these are Old Testament subjects. The illustrations are column width and the average dimension of the blocks is 45 x 70 mm. Hind distinguished the style of the 1490 illustrations as that of the "popular" designer, now known as the Pico Master.³⁰ The miniscule *b* appears in some illustrations. This same miniscule is also found in Giunta's 1499 publication of the *Hypnerotomachia*.³¹ Unlike the extraordinary illustrations in Colonna's volume, however, the general elements of the Bible compositions are derived from other sources. To a large extent

²⁶ On the origins of the Malermi Bible, see Leonardas Vytaitis Gerulaitis, *Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: ALA, 1976) 18; Hind, *History of Woodcut* 2: 464-73; James Strachan, *Early Bible Illustrations: A Short Study on Some Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century Printed Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957) 27-31; and Frank Weitenkampf, "The Malermi Bible and the Spencer Collection," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 33 (1929): 778-88.

²⁷ Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 133. It appears that Giunta was only a publisher and not a printer. F. J. Norton, *Italian Printers 1501-1520* (London: Bowes, 1958) 137.

²⁸ Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 135.

²⁹ Strachan, *Early Bible Illustrations* 31.

³⁰ Hind compared the 1490 "popular" designer to the supposed "classic" designer of the 1493 edition. The "classic" designer may possibly be Benedetto Bordon. Hind, *History of Woodcut* 2: 464. See also Lilian Armstrong, "Il maestro di Pico: un miniature veneziano del tardo Quattrocento," *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 17 (1990): 27.

they were borrowed from the 123 woodcuts of the Cologne Bible of about 1478-79, which had become a model for the majority of Bible-illustrators of the period.³²

The illustrations studied here come specifically from editions of the Malermi Bible printed in 1507 (figs. 33-44) and 1553 (figs. 46-54). The 1507 edition was printed by Bartholomeo Zanni for Lucantonio de Giunta.³³ According to Essling, the woodcuts are the same as those used in Giunta's 1502 edition. The 1502 woodcuts were taken mainly from the Giunta 1490 edition with a few from Giunta's 1492 and 1494 editions.³⁴ The 1553 edition was printed by Aurelio Pincio.³⁵ The 156 blocks, which make up the total 266 illustrations, measure 48 x 75 mm and 45 x 84 mm.³⁶ Most of the blocks are taken from the Bernardino Bindoni edition of 1541, which are for the most part copies of Giorgio Rusconi's 1517 edition.³⁷ The Rusconi 1517 illustrations are themselves copies of the 1490 Giunta blocks. A few of the blocks used in the Pincio 1553 edition are taken directly from the set cut for the Giunta 1490 Bible.

Copied repeatedly and reprinted in books of sacred and secular subject matter, the cuts from the Giunta 1490 Bible had an enduring visual legacy in Venice.³⁸ Even outside of the realm of the printed book, these little illustrations set the iconographic standard for illustrations of Biblical narratives. For example, as late as the seventeenth century these illustrations or one of their many copies were used as models for the

³¹ Minuscles are often found in the early woodcut illustrations and likely signify the cutters. Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 38. Alfred W. Pollard, *Italian Book Illustrations Chiefly of the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1894) 37-38.

³² Hind, *History of Woodcut* 2: 465-66.

³³ Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 141.

³⁴ For the 1502 edition, see Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 139.

³⁵ Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 157. Aurelio Pincio emerges after 1530 from the press of Philippus Pincius, Mantuanus who had been printing since 1490. Norton, *Italian Printers* 148.

³⁶ Mortimer, *Italian Sixteenth-Century Books* 1: 86.

³⁷ Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 143 and 155. See also Mortimer, *Italian Sixteenth-Century Books* 1: 86.

choirstall at the Church of San Moisè (fig. 234). While several of the carved wood stalls follow the simple visual narrative constructions of the Bible images, the most striking comparison is the illustration of the Reconnaissance of Canaan (Num. 13; fig. 53). The illustration specifically depicts verse 23: “and there [Canaan] they cut a branch with a single bunch of grapes, and they carried it on a pole two at a time.”³⁹ This unusual scene is often found in illustrated Bibles, such as the Pincio 1553 edition. In both the choirstall and the print two Hebrew scouts make their way back from the land of Canaan. On their shoulders they balance a large pole supporting an enormous bunch of grapes. Though the wooden stall and the woodcut images differ in details (e.g. the Hebrews’ turbans and the swaying tree in the choirstall), the similarity of the basic iconographic rendering of the scenes suggests the longstanding impact that the printed illustrations had in Venice.

The second group of woodcuts studied here is taken from the lavishly illustrated broadsheet Latin volume published by Giacomo Vidali for Niccolò Bevilacqua in 1576 (figs. 55-77).⁴⁰ The text is composed in two columns with small marginalia. Six hundred and ten woodcuts illustrate the volume, with 345 images in the Old Testament alone. Each illustration is framed by one of a variety of scrolling architectural side-strips. The Old Testament blocks measure on average 55 x 78 mm, extended to column width by the side-strips. The illustrations are carefully positioned above or below the appropriate texts and, in some cases, several cuts are used to emphasize especially important stories. For instance, Exodus 16 is illustrated with

³⁸ Hind, *History of Woodcut* 2: 473.

³⁹ Gregory of Nyssa suggests that the reconnaissance of Canaan stands for the bringing back of hope: “What is the bunch of grapes suspended from the wood but that bunch suspended from the wood in the last days, whose blood becomes a saving drink for those who believe? Moses spoke to us of this ahead of time when he said in a figure: They drank the blood of the grape. By this he signifies the saving passion.” Gregory, *Life* 123. See also the *Biblia Pauperum*.

five separate prints: the murmuring of the Hebrews, the arrival of the quails, the fall of manna, the rest on the Sabbath, and the reservation of the manna. The stylistic rendering of the images with elongated, plastic figures and complex figural compositions suggests a design date in the mid sixteenth century. Based on style, it has been shown that the blocks likely originated in France. Ruth Mortimer suggests that the artists worked from sources introduced at Lyons from 1538 to 1562, including woodcuts by Hans Holbein, Bernard Salomon and Pierre Eskrich.⁴¹

The third group of woodcuts comes from the hand-held octavo Latin volume published by Iolitos in 1588 (figs. 78-88).⁴² This Bible is simple in design. Two columns of text divide each page. The woodcut illustrations appear in undecorated, blocked out spaces at the head of appropriate texts. Despite the simplicity of its construction, the cuts display a wealth and coherence of narrative detail that suggests an experienced artist, possibly based on a pen drawing.⁴³ Though the Iolitos edition was published later in date than the Bevilaque edition, its stout figures are reminiscent of an earlier sixteenth-century aesthetic, recalling the graphic style of Titian. Although this study has been unable to trace the origin of these illustrations, the cut of the *Brazen Serpent* (fig. 88) was published as early as 1568 by Iolitos in Angelico Buonriccio's *Le pie, et Christiane parafrasi sopra l'Evangelio di Matteo, et di San Giovanni*.⁴⁴ This suggests that, even if only one of the Old Testament cuts was used,

⁴⁰ The text is that of the Louvain Bible of 1547. Mortimer, *Italian Sixteenth-Century Books* 1: 88.

⁴¹ Mortimer, *Italian Sixteenth-Century Books* 1: 86. For the sources, see Ruth Mortimer, comp., *Harvard College Library Department of Printing and Graphic Arts Catalogue of Books and Manuscripts: French Sixteenth-Century Books*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1964) nos. 72-95.

⁴² The Iolitos (also Giolitus and Jolitus) family was in the printing business from 1483. Norton, *Italian Printers* 153.

⁴³ By the mid-sixteenth century woodcuts in illustrated books appear that are based on free pen drawings. Ivins, "Venetian Renaissance Woodcut" 48.

⁴⁴ Romanelli, "Tintoretto a San Rocco" 94.

the entire set could have existed at least twenty years before the publication date of the Iolitos 1588 Bible.

In addition to these sets of illustrations, this study also considers a title-page of a Bible translated into Italian by Antonio Brucioli and printed in Venice by Lucantonio de Giunta, May 1532 (fig. 45).⁴⁵ This is the first edition of Brucioli's complete translation of the Bible and includes a dedication to Francis I of France. The title page and the Book of the Apocalypse are the only illustrated areas of the volume. The designer of the Apocalypse is believed to be Matteo da Treviso who copied designs by Hans Holbein.⁴⁶ The title page designer is unknown. However, Caroline Karpinski suggests that the nine vignettes surrounding the publication information are pastiches after Titian, most notably the *Drowning of Pharaoh*.⁴⁷

The Context of the Book

Chapter 2 discussed a woodcut on the large scale: Titian's *Drowning of Pharaoh* (fig. 219). Despite its print medium, this image functions very much like the monumental canvases and frescoes that have formed the majority of works discussed so far: all exist independently of a text. Where inscriptions are included within or alongside these pictures, they are limited to *tituli*, such as those below the sections of the Sistine Chapel walls. The written word plays a minor role to that of the visual work, which is understood to be an exposition on and expansion of the scriptural text to which it refers. In the case of the *Drowning of Pharaoh*, given the scale of the woodcut, the technical proficiency of its rendering and the literate reputation of its artist, the printed

⁴⁵ Essling, *Les livres* 1: 1: no. 147.

⁴⁶ Mortimer, *Italian Sixteenth-Century Books* 1: 85.

⁴⁷ Karpinski, "Some Woodcuts," 272.

image, like the painted pictures, leads to the expectation that it will be a visual interpretation—rather than a simple pictorial regurgitation—of Scripture. Indeed it was proposed that the image is replete with meaning, the pictorial details, composition and technical handling working together to project a uniquely Venetian representation of Moses.

While Titian's monumental woodcut evokes a biblical story from the memory of the viewer, book illustrations are presented simultaneously with the Scripture.⁴⁸ The small woodcuts of illustrated printed Bibles exist decisively within the physical context of the book: they are embedded within text. This intrinsic connection with the written word on the printed page might suggest that the illustrations play a secondary role, that they, like the *tituli* in the Sistine Chapel, are shorthand guides to the full textual narratives. The relationship between text and image on the printed page is, however, rarely this straightforward. As an introduction to the complexity of the book as context, two woodcut illustrations of the Drowning of Pharaoh may be examined.

Fig. 36 appears just above the text of Exodus 14 in a Bible printed in 1507. The illustration fits the width of the column, providing a neat and simple pictorial header to the story of the Hebrews' escape from Egypt. The engraved lines avoid complex details and aim instead for uncomplicated renditions of forms, drapery and landscape. The ragged coastline divides the composition precisely down the middle, delineating good from bad, Chosen from evil. To the left, the heads of the horses and charioteers of Pharaoh's army jut out of the placid waves of the sea. The resigned demeanor of the men as they drown—to say nothing of the comical protrusion of a

⁴⁸ While the printed image is usually located with printed text, it is also easily manipulated, cut out and put into new contexts. Chartier, *Culture of Print* 5. All of the images discussed here are located in their

horse's hind quarter in the middle of the sea—sets a calm tone over what should be a grim scene. On the right, the Hebrews head away from the shoreline. Moses is in the lead, dressed in a toga-like outfit and raising his staff high. Two slim horns emerge from his head. Men cluster tightly behind him followed by kneeling women and one small child. In the background, their animals follow—including, rather ironically for Hebrews, a pig.

Fig. 81 also appears in conjunction with Exodus 14 in a Bible printed in 1588. Here the image appears to provide a rich pictorial pendant to the text. The technical proficiency of the line-work renders forms in detail as well as the sense of light, shadow and atmosphere. The advanced handling of the medium allows for the inclusion of greater narrative detail as well. A procession of Hebrew men, women and children emerges from the narrowing gap in the Red Sea. The men at the back, dressed in Roman armor, carry spears and an ark, indications of their booty from Egypt (Exod. 12: 35-36). Moses stands as their leader wearing the priestly chasuble. Two light rays emit from his head. Above him an angel hovers on a cloud steering the way. Behind the group Pharaoh, still wearing his crown, raises his fist in anger as the turbulent waves close over him and his army. In the far distance an enormous three-pronged cloud rises from the hills on the horizon.

The simple stylistic rendering and schematic narrative interpretation of the 1507 illustration suggest that it is little more than an economical headline for the full text below it. By contrast the technical accomplishment and generous use of detail of the 1588 illustration may lead us to assume that it is a complete visual summary of the accompanying text. However, even as the first image pares down the text to the

essentials, it supplements it with unusual genre details or out of place symbols: the horse's posterior protruding from the water; the pig in the company of Hebrews; Moses with horns twenty chapters before the renewal of the Law (Exod. 34: 29). And although the wealth of detail of the second image suggests a close appraisal of the text, the use of these features indicates the opposite: the angel guides the Hebrews when he should be behind them (Exod. 14: 19); the cloud materializes in the distance when it should be separating the Hebrews and Egyptians (Exod. 14: 19); Moses appears with rays of light, disrupting again the chronological sequence of Scripture. Despite their location—their close proximity to the written word—these images do not illustrate, they do not adhere to the literal. Indeed, even as they relate to the text both visually on the page and literally in evoking the narrative, these small woodcuts, like Titian's *Drowning of Pharaoh*, are also spaces for exposition and interpretation.

Page Layout and Reading

In early print history, the relationship between image and word was not always textual but it was always visual. In the first manifestations of the printed book, block books encouraged the visual integration of image and text.⁴⁹ Each page of a block book is printed by a single wooden block, into which both image and text are carved in relief. The most famous example is the *Biblia Pauperum*, a mid-fifteenth century block book deriving from manuscript editions of at least two centuries earlier. It exhibits full-page illustrations of the life of Christ framed by relevant Old Testament stories and surrounding texts, captions, quotations and exegeses (figs. 28-32). For example, the

Titian's *Drowning of Pharaoh*, where interpretation is based primarily on visual cues.

page focusing on the Baptism of Christ incorporates scenes of the Drowning of Pharaoh and the Reconnoitering of Canaan (fig. 29). Scriptural explanations for the juxtaposition of the scenes are positioned above.⁵⁰ However, banners that scroll out from underneath the portraits of Isaiah and David interrupt the connection between the main scenes and their texts.⁵¹ The same is true in the lower half of the page, where the portraits of Ezekiel and Zechariah and their scrolls disrupt the relationship between the central scene and its caption below.⁵² This kind of layout does not allow for uncomplicated left-to-right reading, where a caption is read, an illustration is viewed and then the reader moves on to the next set. Instead, it encourages the eye to jump around the page, to form an interconnected dialogue among the various images and verses. Rather than simply acting as props to the text, images in the *Biblia Pauperum* work with the text so that the page as a whole gives visual form to the Christian understanding of the continuity of Old and New Covenants.⁵³

⁴⁹ Block books have previously been understood to have preceded typographic printing by up to thirty years. Strachan, *Early Bible Illustrations* 7. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years* 70. More recently, some scholars suggest that the two developed concurrently. Hindman and Farquhar, *Pen to Press* 110.

⁵⁰ For the Latin transcription and the English translation of the *Biblia Pauperum*, see *The Bible of the Poor*, trans. Albert C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1990). Exodus 14: 21-28: "We read in Exodus, chapter 14, that when the Pharaoh was pursuing the children of Israel with chariots and horsemen, he entered the Red Sea after the children of Israel, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them. Thus, He delivered His people from the hand of the enemy who were pursuing. Now by the waters of baptism sanctified by Christ, He freed the Christian people from the chains of original sin." Numbers 13: 24: "We read in the Book of Numbers, chapter 13, that when the scouts who were sent to explore the Promised Land returned, they cut off bunches of grapes and carried them on a staff. After they crossed the Jordan, they brought them as evidence of the excellence of the land. This incident shows that if we wish to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must first pass through the waters of baptism." The verse below the Red Sea reads: "The enemies walk through the path of the sea and are drowned." The verse below the Reconnoitering of Canaan reads: "The river is crossed and the land of honey is reached." *Bible of the Poor* 107.

⁵¹ Isaiah 12: 3: "You shall now draw waters with joy out of the savior's fountains." Psalm 67: 27: "In the churches bless God the Lord, from the fountains of Israel." *Bible of the Poor* 107.

⁵² Ezekiel 36: 25: "I will pour upon you clean water." Zechariah 13: 1: In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David." Bottom verse: "Baptism is made sacred when Christ is baptized." *Bible of the Poor* 107.

⁵³ The dialogue between image and text in the *Biblia Pauperum* is similar to the textual relationships set in the *Glossa ordinaria*. The layout of Scripture, the *Glossa* and sometimes also the *Postillae* of Nicholas of Lyra (1274-1349) on the same page presented the texts in complex visual connections. Like the *Biblia Pauperum* this again encouraged a constant shifting of the eye across the page. The

If nothing else, these complex block book pages required slow and meditative reading. In order to take in the full visual and textual information on, time needed to be spent scanning, moving the eye over and between segments, following the cues to form mental associations. By the sixteenth century, the technological combination of movable type and single woodcut images was pushing the more work-intensive block book to the margins of the print trade. Nevertheless, a version of the *Biblia Pauperum* was printed in Venice as late as 1530.⁵⁴ This indicates that the practice of slow reading of images and text as an integrated whole on the printed page continued to be part of the literary habits of sixteenth-century Venetians.

In addition to the *Biblia Pauperum*, this contemplative method of reading survived in the early illustrated title page. A case in point is Antonio Brucioli's translation of the Bible printed by Lucantonio de Giunta in 1532 (fig. 45).⁵⁵ Like the modern title page, Brucioli's introduces the book to the reader: it presents the full title of the book, the name of translator and commentator, and the date and city of publication.⁵⁶ Woodcut illustrations of various Biblical scenes surround the text.⁵⁷ At the top are three scenes from Genesis: the Creation of Eve, the Temptation in the

Gloss pages of the Middle Ages were first printed in Venice by Jenson in 1481 Black, "Printed Bible" 421.

⁵⁴ Hindman and Farquhar, *Pen to Press* 110.

⁵⁵ The same title page border was used in other Latin and vernacular Bibles printed in Venice. *Vulgata aeditio veteris ac novi testamenti...* (Venice: Petrum Schoeffer, 1542). *La bibbia tradotta in lingua Toscana...* (Venice: Lucantonio Giunta, 1546). Mortimer cites a reduced copy of this border in Giovanni Maria Velmazio's *Ueteris & noui testame'ti opus singulare* of 1538. Mortimer, *Italian Sixteenth-Century Books* 1: 85, 2: 723. See also Francesco Barberi, *Il frontespizio del Quattrocento e del Cinquecento* (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1969) 132.

⁵⁶ The first title page was printed in Strasburg in 1486. However, the use of title pages did not become widespread until after 1500. Black, "The Printed Bible," 421. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years* 65. A.F. Johnson, "Title-Pages: Their Forms and Development," 1928, *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*, ed. Percy H. Muir (Amsterdam: Van Gendt, 1970) 288.

⁵⁷ Historiated title pages were more common outside of Italy. However, where illustrated title pages appear in books printed in Italy, the woodcut borders did not always correspond with the subject of the book. For example, Johnson notes the use of Biblical borders for a medical text. Title pages with engraved illustrations, which were often more appropriate in their subject choice, did become

Garden and the Expulsion from the Garden. To the left of the publication information are stories from Exodus: Moses before Pharaoh and the Drowning of Pharaoh. To the right are stories from the New Testament: the Nativity and the Resurrection of Christ. The pair at the bottom represents Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law opposite St Paul preaching.

The neat and orderly compartmentalization of the cuts hints at a simple interpretation, principally a typological one. The three scenes of Genesis at the top initiate the sequence by setting up humanity's need for salvation. The rest of the scenes work in pairs. Although the combination of Moses before Pharaoh and the Nativity is unusual (the *Biblia Pauperum* places the Burning Bush as the pendant to the Nativity; fig. 28), both refer to the infant stage of mission. The Drowning of Pharaoh and the Resurrection is a fairly common pair. As in the *Biblia Pauperum*, the Passage through the Red Sea is a type for both baptism and resurrection: the Hebrews and the Egyptians descend into the darkness of the sea; then the Chosen are raised out victorious while the evil ones perish (fig. 29).⁵⁸ The juxtaposition of Moses and St Paul is also a standard one: Moses as deliverer of the Old Law and Paul as apostle of the New Law.⁵⁹ Previous chapters have already discussed how Paul makes the contrast between the covenant of Moses and the covenant of Christ in his letters to the Corinthians. In 2 Cor. 3: 3-11, he distinguishes between the tablets of stone and Spirit written on the human heart. Particularly relevant here, Paul goes on in verses 12-13 to preach that those filled with the splendor of the Spirit speak out boldly even though

fashionable in Italy in the mid-sixteenth century. Johnson, "Title-Pages" 291. Barberi, *Il frontespizio* 131-2.

⁵⁸ For more images of the *Drowning of Pharaoh*, see Chapter 2.

⁵⁹ On the monumental scale, this comparison is demonstrated at the Church of San Francesco della Vigna where Tiziano Aspetti's 1562 bronze statues of the prophet and Paul frame the doorway (fig. 2).

Moses had kept himself—and the Spirit he saw—veiled from the Hebrews. The Brucioli Bible title page echoes this theme. On the left, Moses, alone on Mount Sinai, reaches up to receive the tablets out of a cloud and amid rays of light. His back is turned, establishing his closeness with God and simultaneously suggesting his veiled or obscured position in comparison to the Hebrews keeping their distance as they wait in the valley below. By contrast, St Paul gesticulates wildly from a raised podium, brandishing a sword in his left hand and commanding the attention of his audience. The crowd gathers near and looks directly to the apostle to hear his words as a small child at the right and a lame beggar look away, interlocutors with the reader. In sum, the historiated border encapsulates the Christian understanding of the Bible and the relationship between Old and New Testaments.

The simplicity of the typologies and uniform borders of the woodcuts imply that the page was laid out for convenience of reading. However, the manner in which the text operates is far from straightforward. Words break off at the end of lines without consideration for syntax. Spacing is irregular, as, for instance, in the wide space between sentences in the fifth line down. Roman letter, italic and Hebrew type in at least three different sizes mix on the same page. Even the title itself is long and convoluted, composed in three sizes of type. Decorativeness takes precedence over readability. Though the visual interruptions may not be as apparent as those in the *Biblia Pauperum*, the Brucioli title page also encourages an irregular reading process. The abrupt line breaks and the altering of type and language provide pauses for the reader. As Walter Ong notes, this type of title page is less of a label and more of a conversation, a slipping from line to line, word to word, stopping and starting at

variable intervals.⁶⁰ It instigates a slow and meditative reading rather than a quick and consistent one.

Amid the stops and starts of the text, opportunities are open to the reader to change focus and shift vision to other parts of the page, particularly back and forth from the images. This is not to suggest that the visual typologies cease to function. Indeed, they function on the Brucioli title page as certainly as they do on the pages of the *Biblia Pauperum*. However, as with the *Biblia Pauperum*, the way in which the title page typologies were read and intellectualized in the sixteenth century was a slow and interrupted process that took in the page as a whole. The printed page set up a dialogue between image and text, a dialogue that instigated contemplation.

Connections between Narratives: Printed Book Illustration

The relationship between image and text on the title page is thematic rather than literal: there is no narrative link between the typological pictures and the publication information. Within the pages of the Bibles, however, image and text share stories. Page layout makes this visually apparent even before the scripture is read. Take, for instance, the cut portraying Moses confronting Aaron about the worship of the golden calf (fig. 86) in the Iolitos 1588 Bible. Since the woodcut is easily maneuvered in relation to the type, the illustration appears directly above Exodus 32. Located just over the chapter heading, the image acts as a header itself, an index of what is to come. Like the short summaries that often appear above chapters in the early printed Bibles—as they do in the Pincio 1553 edition—the illustration suggests a brief

⁶⁰ Ong suggests that the oral culture of the sixteenth century—the fact that most readers read slowly aloud or *sotto voce*—made the streamlining of text irrelevant: readers were carefully listening to the

encapsulation of the chapter: Moses, just returned from Mount Sinai, confronts Aaron the high priest; the tablets of the law lie broken on the ground; in the background some of the Hebrews hold hands as they dance around the golden calf raised on a plinth. The visual immediacy of image and text suggests that this pictorial narrative relates to the literal one.

The cohesion of the narratives is reinforced further by the black-and-white composition of the page. The simple linearity of both the Roman typeface and the woodcut design facilitates the movement of the eye across the page, the easy visual interchange between image and text.⁶¹ The swirling outward motion of the smoke rising from the idol leads the eye back to the text above while the horizontal banding in the sky echoes the line pattern of the text. The outline of the block itself mimics the ruled lines that run alongside and between the columns. This is in contrast to the late medieval manuscript with its colorful illusionism and the later chiaroscuro woodcut with its variations in tone. These create differentiating boundaries between image and text.⁶² In fig. 86, though, the uniformity of block and typeface affords unity of image and text, more dialogue and less disjunction.

It is precisely this visual dialogue that prevents the image from being simply a summary or reference to the text. As in the title page, the image interacts with the text via the process of reading. In the Bevilacqua 1576 edition, the story of the golden calf is expanded to four separate blocks inserted at appropriate moments in the text (figs.

words they read rather than skimming along lines in a silent mental process. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982) 119-120, 125.

⁶¹ This point has already been raised with reference to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and its "overall composition of text and image into a harmonious whole, which allows the eye to slip back and forth between textual description and corresponding visual representation with the greatest of ease." Lefaivre, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* 17.

⁶² Cf. Michael Camille, "Reading the Printed Image: Illuminations and Woodcuts of the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* in the Fifteenth Century," Hindman, *Printing the Written Word* 282-83.

69-72). In the first frame, Moses kneels atop a mountain in the distance surrounded by clouds and fire. Below Aaron collects the golden jewelry from a group of Hebrews, while on the right, three women and a child assemble their various ornaments. In the second frame, Aaron stands beside the calf raised up on a marble altar. A fire burns on a plinth below it and a heifer and lambs are slaughtered for the holocaust. The Hebrews kneel in worship at the left. The third in the sequence depicts the Hebrew women dancing around the calf raised high on a pillar. At the foreground, Moses raises the tablets of the Law above his head as he is about to bring them smashing to the ground. Joshua, dressed in Roman armor, accompanies him. In the final scene the column is broken and the calf lies on the ground in flames. Moses lurches forward in a rage, raising his staff above his head. The Hebrews flee in horror as Aaron stands in their midst attempting feebly to defend himself. On the one hand, these images illustrate key moments in the text, offering in an easy-to-see picture format the literal story. On the other hand, their placement within the text adjusts the pace and the flow of the written narrative, of the reading process itself. As the text of the title page started and stopped at intervals, so these images introduce breaks into the literal narrative. They mark out a four-beat rhythm. Even as the image merges visually with the word, it disrupts the process of reading the word.

The inclusion of images in the text complicates the comprehension of the narrative even as it clarifies it. This is no more obvious than in cases where the illustration does not correspond to the text it accompanies. In the Pincio 1553 edition, the illustration preceding Exodus 32 bears little relation to the corresponding scripture (fig. 52). A king and a man appear at a window in a castle with high, crenellated walls. Below the Archangel Michael brandishing his sword swoops down upon a heap

of slain soldiers. To the right, a king and soldiers escape the scene of devastation. The word SENACHERIBRE appears above them. On a very basic level, the peculiar scene refers to the Levites' revenge against the Hebrews who are guilty of worshipping the golden idol. However, the image was clearly intended to illustrate the victory of King Hezekiah of the Kingdom of Judah over King Sennacherib of Assyria (2 Kings 19: 35): "That same night the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. In the early morning when it was time to get up, there they lay, so many corpses." As discussed earlier, this incongruous matching of text and image in printed books was quite common in the age. The conventional explanation for this has been that the reuse of woodblocks was both labor saving and economical. As Landau and Parshall suggest, "If there is a common denominator among all early examples of illustrated books in Italy, it is the carelessness with which most printers dealt with woodcuts, inserting them where convenient to the publisher rather than the reader."⁶³ However, this analysis assumes that the reader is expecting a "convenient" read. Recently, Michael Camille has pointed out that the same use of stock images occurs in hand-painted miniatures. Rather than a sign of the thrift or laziness of the printer or the illuminator, repetition of images signals continuity within Scripture.⁶⁴ With reference to the Pincio 1553 Bible, the picture reflects in essence the text it accompanies while simultaneously it leads the reader to another text, to another part of the Bible. An analogy is formed between Exodus 32 and 2 Kings 19, between the Hebrews in the desert and the Kingdom of Judah, between Moses and King Hezekiah. Rather than an inconvenient

⁶³ Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 36. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 108.

interruption, the out-of-place image gave the reader opportunity to pause for contemplation and form connections between scriptural passages.

Cross-connections within Scripture were already being made on the printed page through marginalia. The Scriptures were not meant to be read from start to finish like a novel but one story in conjunction with another so as to build up a deepened underlying—and, of course, Christian—meaning. In aid of this, marginalia acted as pointers to other biblical stories, creating the interconnected network of passages that is the Christian understanding of the Bible. However, while marginalia specify the exact associations between scriptural passages, the image is less explicit. Rather than providing an exact reference, the out-of-place illustration obliges the reader to recall the location of the story it depicts. Therefore in the example from the Pincio 1553 edition, the reader is required to recognize the word “SENACHERIBRE” and to form the indexical relationship between the illustration of Exodus 32 and 2 Kings 19. The interaction of the reader makes sense of the out-of-place image.

In the Exodus narratives, a subtle and recurring prompt for the reader is the inclusion of horns or light rays emanating from Moses’ head in illustrations that precede Exodus 34: 29 (figs. 36-39, 41, 42, 49, 50, 60-67, 71-73, 79, 82-86). These signs do not belong in the images in the strict chronological sense, yet they act as pointers—as indexes—to something else that the sixteenth-century Bible reader knows, something outside of the immediate context on the page. The constant presence of horns or the rays forms a consistent portrayal of Moses throughout the Exodus. Thus, the man who saw Yahweh in the burning bush, the man who led the Hebrews through the Red Sea and the man who held his arms up to strengthen the

⁶⁴ Camille, “Reading” 268-69.

fight against the Amalekites is the same man whose face shown radiantly after seeing the face of God. Since, as we have seen already, the horn was symbol of strength, honor, victory, power, divinity, kingship and/or salvation, these virtues are associated with Moses in each depiction.⁶⁵ The out-of-place horns require the reader to recall the theophany of Sinai and use that understanding of Moses to inform all readings of him.

The reader's interaction with the printed page is called upon most when the image accompanying a text refers to something outside of Scripture. For example, the image accompanying Exodus 2 in the Giunta 1507 edition (fig. 33) relates specifically to the first ten verses of the chapter, which recount the finding of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter. At the background a woman places a box into a flowing river. A king wearing a crown and a woman, presumably Pharaoh and his daughter, stand on a bridge at the middle ground. The Egyptian princess points to another woman on the riverbank at the left who retrieves a baby in a basket from the water. So far the illustration varies only slightly from the Biblical text, inserting Pharaoh into the moment of the finding as well as a bridge and various architectural elements into the surroundings. The scene at the lower right, however, is a more radical departure from the text: the princess holds the child up to the king and the child reaches for the king's crown. This is the initial scene of the apocryphal story of the Testing of Moses.⁶⁶ Unlike the illustration of the slaying of Sennacherib's army at Exodus 32, this illustration does not lead the reader to another part of the Bible. Rather, it leads the reader outside of the Bible, stirring the mind to recall the apocryphal story from Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* or the *Fioretti della Bibbia*.⁶⁷ With reference to

⁶⁵ See Chapter 2.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 1.

⁶⁷ For Josephus's account, see Chapter 1. *El fiore*, ch. 105.

fifteenth-century Dutch Bible illustration, Sandra Hindman has already argued that the motive in the image that draws not only on the canonical text but also from other sources is an effort to clarify the Scripture.⁶⁸ In the same way, the illustration for Exodus 2 in the Giunta 1507 edition not only visualizes the immediate text, it also helps to clarify through an external reference the character of Moses.

The illustrations to texts in the sixteenth-century printed Bibles were not always meant to be convenient. While their primary function was to encapsulate the immediate text, their secondary purpose was to build a bigger picture of the text by forming connections within and sometimes beyond Scripture. Given the complicated, slow and inherently contemplative process of reading that this inspired, the reader cannot be described as passively absorbing information. Instead, the reader must have been active in building up a deep Christian understanding of Moses and the Exodus.

Connections Between Narratives: Monumental Painting

The link between book illustration and monumental painting has been a tempting subject for scholars. In 1929, Frank Weitenkampf, in a discussion of the 1493 edition of the Malermi Bible, suggested that it would be “highly interesting” to compare the small woodblock images with the monumental art of painting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁶⁹ Since then comparisons have generally been limited to discussions of style, suggesting that early Venetian woodcut illustrations echo the draftsmanship of artists such as Carpaccio and the Bellini family.⁷⁰ Additionally,

⁶⁸ Hindman cites specifically images borrowed from the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* that appear in Bibles. Sandra Hindman, “Fifteenth-Century Dutch Bible Illustration and the *Historia Scholastica*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974): 131-144.

⁶⁹ Weitenkampf, “Malermi Bible” 786.

⁷⁰ Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print* 33.

discussions of subject matter have been dominated by the *Biblia Pauperum*, cited repeatedly as the source book for monumental programs that betray a typological theme.⁷¹ In light of the preceding discussion, however, we might also speculate that the way that illustrations made connections between narratives on the printed page was in itself a source of inspiration for artists working on monumental religious painting. In the context of Tintoretto's ongoing innovation of the image of Moses, where unusual details prevail, the illustrated book and the reading process may provide a space for untangling some narrative anomalies.

A case in point is the *Miracle of the Manna* (1591-92; figs. 216-17) at the left hand side of the high altar of the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore (fig. 4).⁷² Focusing on the Hebrews in the desert surrounded by the manna, the scene is reminiscent of another rendition of the subject at SS Apostoli by the school of Veronese (1583-88; fig. 230). In both, the Israelite camp is set in a green and leafy pasture with Moses and the high priest at the right. However, while the Veronesean painting depicts the Hebrews engaged in general pastoral activities, such as tending sheep, Tintoretto's painting is rich in unusual narrative details. The Hebrew camp gathers around a rocky riverbank shaded by leafy palm fronds. Moses, distinguishable by the light rays and shining halo at his head, sits at the right corner. He is accompanied by an elder, probably Aaron, who gestures to the scene behind them where the Hebrews are busy at work. One man guides a beast of burden at the background; a cobbler sews the leather of a shoe on the left; and a group of three men work a forge at the back left. In a shaded alcove a group gathers around a blazing fire, perhaps preparing the cakes of

⁷¹ For comparisons between the *Biblia Pauperum* and the Sala Superiore cycle at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, see Chapter 5.

⁷² Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 466.

manna described in Scripture. (Num 11: 7-8) Along the river the Hebrew women clean and mend clothes. One of this group sits at the foreground, holding a leafy branch to her breast and looking out beyond the picture plane. Around the scene the manna from heaven lies on the ground.

At first glance, Tintoretto's painting, when viewed in conjunction with its pendant *Last Supper* (fig. 218), fits neatly into the typological formula set by the *Biblia Pauperum*: the heavenly provision of manna for the starving Hebrews in the desert prefigures the spiritual provision of the Eucharist (fig. 30).⁷³ However, the *Biblia Pauperum* depicts specifically the *Fall of Manna*, the rain of bread that Yahweh promised in Exodus 16: 4. Though Tintoretto portrayed the *Fall of Manna* in the past, most prominently for one of the principal ceiling paintings at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco (fig. 203), manna is not showering from the sky in the San Giorgio Maggiore painting but instead covers the ground. Ridolfi must have noticed this when he referred to the painting as the *Miracle of Manna*.⁷⁴ The Hebrews do not gather their daily rations but instead busy themselves with cleaning and mending.

The reaction of Moses to the events around him may provide a clue to deciphering the scene. He sits on the far right, leaning on the tablets of the Law. Tintoretto portrays him as a young, bearded man wearing the red tunic and blue cloak, mirroring the outfit worn by Christ in the pendant image. Although the Hebrews are not following their instructions in Exodus 16 to gather up the manna, the prophet appears undisturbed by their apparent obstinacy. Indeed, on other occasions of Hebrew disobedience, such as at the worship of the golden calf, Moses did not

⁷³ *Bible of the Poor*, 116. For the *Last Supper*, see Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cat. 467.

hesitate to explode with anger. In the San Giorgio Maggiore painting, however, he appears to support the actions of the Hebrews in their work-a-day tasks. As Aaron gestures nervously back to the camp, Moses calmly puts out his hand as if to assure the high priest that there is nothing to worry about. Given that Moses endorses the actions of the Hebrews it is unlikely, as has been suggested, that the painting is a Counter Reform illustration of those who reject the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.⁷⁵ Instead, his reaction may indicate that the work that they perform is precisely what he wants them to do.

Illustrations for Exodus 16 in the printed Bibles typically depict the Hebrew men and women under the supervision of Moses gathering up the manna, sometimes even catching it in baskets as it falls from the sky. However, not long after the manna falls from heaven and Moses strikes water from the rock, Yahweh promises a covenant with the Israelites and orders through the mouthpiece of Moses how they should prepare for his coming:

Yahweh then said to Moses, "Go to the people and tell them to sanctify themselves today and tomorrow. They must wash their clothes and be ready for the day after tomorrow; for the day after tomorrow, in the sight of all the people, Yahweh will descend on Mount Sinai. So Moses came down from the mountain to the people; he made the people sanctify themselves and they washed their clothes. (Exodus 19: 10-11, 14)

⁷⁴ Ridolfi refers to the San Giorgio Maggiore painting as *il miracolo della manna*. By contrast, he refers to the ceiling painting at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco as *il cader della manna*. Ridolfi, *Vite* 38 and 89.

⁷⁵ Nicola Ivanoff, "Il ciclo eucharistico di S. Giorgio Maggiore a Venezia," *Notizie da Palazzo Albani* 4 (1975): 50-57 and "The Paintings in San Giorgio Maggiore," *Apollo* 104 (1976): 45-47.

Illustrations almost always accompany Exodus 19, usually depicting the theophany on Sinai described in verses 16-25 and sometimes including the tablets of the Law as a reference to the presentation of the Decalogue in chapter 20. However, in the Bevilacqua 1576 edition the illustration makes particular reference to the verses cited above (fig. 67). Moses, accompanied by some of the male Hebrews, stands to the right directing with his staff. At his feet are women washing clothes in a basin while another figure disrobes. Behind them numerous figures wash their garments along the winding riverbank. Like this small woodcut, Tintoretto's *Miracle of Manna* also emphasizes this type of women's work.

The analogous figures of the book illustration and the painting indicate that Tintoretto might have looked to the Bevilacqua Bible as a model. However, more importantly, the manner in which Tintoretto used the image of Exodus 19 in conjunction with Exodus 16 suggests that he was also looking to the way illustrations functioned on the printed page. The conflation of stories—the miracle of the manna and the preparation for the covenant—is reminiscent of the placement of out-of-place illustrations that was a matter of course in the arrangement of the printed Bibles. In the Pincio 1553 Bible illustration for 2 Kings 19 was placed next to Exodus 32, inviting the reader to understand the Scriptures as an interconnected whole. Similarly, Tintoretto appears to have brought in elements from Exodus 19 into what should simply be an illustration of Exodus 16, expanding the understanding of the painting of the left wall of the chapel. Like the Brucioli title page, this does not rule out the typology: the juxtaposition of manna and Eucharist is certainly at the heart of the high altar program at San Giorgio Maggiore. However, typology is only the starting point

for a slow, contemplative approach to the painting that calls upon the viewer to make the necessary narrative connections.

We have seen this conflation of scriptural stories before. For instance, Chapter 4 demonstrated that the *Blasphemy of the Hebrews and Moses at Mount Sinai* at the Madonna dell'Orto links Exodus 32 with Exodus 34 in order to emphasize the distinction between earthbound darkness with the illumination and transfiguration of the body and soul that occurs in the presence of the Lord. In part, this was dependant upon the writings of Gregory of Nyssa. This is equally true at San Giorgio Maggiore. In Book 1 of his life of Moses, Gregory describes the preparation for God's covenant:

Here Moses guided them in a most secret initiation. The divine power itself by marvels beyond description initiated all the people and their leader himself in the following manner. The people were ordered beforehand to keep themselves from defilements of all kind, which pertain to both soul and body and to purify themselves by certain lustrations. They were to keep themselves pure from intercourse for a stated number of days so that, pure of passion, they might approach the mountain to be initiated, cleansed of every emotion and bodily concern. (The name of the mountain was Sinai.) (Book 1, 42)⁷⁶

Here Gregory highlights that the purification of both body and soul—both the external and the internal body—is necessary before the mountain of God may be approached. Like his comments on the removal of sandals before the burning bush, discussed in Chapter 4, the attention to the physical is a metaphor for the attention to the spiritual. In Book 2 he comments on this further, again with reference to Exodus 19, making the parallel more explicit:

⁷⁶ Gregory, *Life* 41-42.

His way to such knowledge is purity, not only purity of a body sprinkled by some lustral vessels but also of the clothes washed from every stain with water. This means that the one person who would approach the contemplation of Being must be pure in all things so as to be pure in soul and body, washed stainless of every spot in both parts, in order that he might appear pure to the One who sees what is hidden and that visible respectability might correspond to the inward condition of his soul. For this reason the garments are washed at divine command before he ascends the mountain, the garments representing for us in a figure the outward respectability of life. No one would say that a visible spot on the garments hinders the progress of those ascending to God, but I think that the outward pursuits of life are well named the ‘garment.’

(Book 2, 154 and 155)⁷⁷

Gregory’s commentary emphasizes that the washing of garments is a metaphor for the cleansing of one’s life.⁷⁸ This is what is portrayed in the Bevilacque illustration and in the central composition of Tintoretto’s *Miracle of the Manna*. The women wash and mend, spin and sew out of piety. It is their required contribution to the preparation of the group. The shoemaker, peddler and blacksmiths, Tintoretto’s own peculiar additions, expand Scripture further to include masculine labor in the preparatory activities. In the Venetian tradition, the whole collective takes part, each in his own way.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Gregory, *Life* 92-93.

⁷⁸ The correlation of physical renovation with spiritual renewal was also a feature of Benedictine reform theology at San Giorgio Maggiore. See Sonia Holden Evers, “The Art of Paolo Veronese: Artistic Identity in Harmony with Patrician Ideology,” diss., U of California Berkeley (1994) 231.

⁷⁹ Nichols also suggests that the working Hebrews in the picture anticipates the wide social range of viewers of the painting. Nichols, *Tintoretto* 235-6. The Benedictine Church of San Giorgio Maggiore was the site of one of the most spectacular annual ducal *andate* (see fig. 124), indicating its position as a locus for the Venetian community.

This still leaves the difficulty of the Hebrews ignoring the manna scattered on the ground. Although the manna is the prototype for the Eucharist, as explained in the Gospel of John, the bread that feeds the body is nothing compared to the true bread given by God. (John 6: 32-33) Though the manna might fulfill their dietary needs, the Hebrews in the *Miracle of the Manna* are focused on their spiritual needs: they are preparing for a meeting with God himself. They must purify themselves both body and soul for the imminent appearance of Yahweh in the camp, the true presence of God. Therefore, they are not oblivious to the manna, per se, but preparing for an even greater interaction with the Lord. The figure of the woman at the left underlines this point, her expectant gaze out to some distant horizon suggesting that she anxiously awaits the coming of God.⁸⁰

Within this scene of anticipation, the figure of Moses sits calmly in the corner of the scene. He too awaits the coming of the Lord. However, his attributes inform the viewer of his special role analogous to Christ in the *Last Supper* (fig. 218). Both figures are illuminated by haloes of light, signs of their closeness to God: Christ as the second person of the Trinity and Moses as one of the great prophets. Both wear a red tunic and blue cloak, sign of their corresponding roles and also of their leadership position within their respective groups. However, as Christ feeds the Apostles the Eucharist—the bread of life—Moses can only encourage his people to prepare. The tablets on which he rests—another image out-of-place because at the point of the preparation for the covenant he has not yet ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Law—symbolize extent of closeness to the Lord that Hebrews of the Old Covenant will realize. Nevertheless, the image is inherently positive. In contrast to Aaron's

⁸⁰ This figure has been compared to a sibyl, prophesying the coming of God. Ivanoff, "Paintings in San

anxious gesticulation to the Hebrew camp, the gentle, outstretched hand and the quiet, repose of Moses not only endorses the actions of the working men and women but it is a reminder to be patient, to wait in the eschatological sense. While the manna of Exodus 16 provides the antetype for the Eucharist, the purifications of Exodus 19 are reminders to await and prepare the coming of the Lord.

Conclusion

The popular image of Moses must be considered within its particular context: the printed pages of the Bible. These small, woodcut illustrations—though simplistic in themselves—not only elucidate the texts that they accompany but also work together to encourage a cumulative way of thinking about Scripture. The frequent mismatched placement of images in relation to text indicates that stories should not be read in isolation but in continuity. Similarly, the inclusion of symbols, such as the horns of Moses, without regard for chronology encourages the reader to make links between sections, stressing the intrinsic character of the prophet: even before Exodus 34, Moses always embodies all that the horns symbolize. The way that these images work on the printed page depend on the slow, contemplative process of reading that was characteristic of the period.

While printed images have often been recognized as sources for monumental painting, we might also consider the way that these images were read. The cross-referencing of stories that was common on the printed page can also be found in Tintoretto's *Miracle of the Manna* where the events of the Exodus 16 and 19 are conflated. As a result, the relationship between this image and the pendant *Last*

Supper is expanded beyond typology, the simple opposition of Old Testament antetype to New Testament realization, to touch on spiritual reflections of the preparation of the soul and the coming real presence of the Lord. A continuity is achieved, an understanding of Old and New Testament on the eschatological level. In this sense, Moses—with his halo, rays of light and the tablets of the Law—is always the man patiently directing the people to communion with God.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Tintoretto's Legacy and Veronese's Alternative

Summary

As we have seen, the image of Moses in Venice is distinctly different to images of the prophet found elsewhere in Renaissance Italy. While Moses as the symbol of leader, lawgiver and priest prevails in Rome and Florence, in Venice his personal identity is subsumed into that of the group. This is especially true of the earliest images from the Veneto and Venice where the figure of the prophet is downplayed either by inserting him inconspicuously among the Hebrews who are busy collecting manna or water from the rock or, as in Titian's *Drowning of Pharaoh* (fig. 219), by illustrating the back of Moses, thus obscuring his identity, and exploiting the medium, in this case woodcut printing, so that the figure appears contiguous with the other elements of the visual narrative. In either case, the biography of Moses is subordinate to the wider narrative.

This emphasis reflects at its base the Myth of Venice, which focused on collective unity. This is especially evident in the works of Tintoretto at the Madonna dell'Orto, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and San Giorgio Maggiore where the Hebrews as a group are bound by their sin, their redemption and their acts of purification. Within these scenes Moses' spiritual closeness to God is repeatedly underscored. On the one hand, this recalls the Byzantine heritage of Venice, which regarded Moses as a saint, a witness to God and his ways. Equally, this asserts a spiritual understanding of the Exodus that can be traced to the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, printed in Venice at mid-century, and to more general Catholic beliefs,

particularly on the Real Presence, which were reaffirmed at the Council of Trent but had been a staple of Venetian devotion through the Chapels of the Sacrament since the later fifteenth century.

Relative to these cultural and religious factors, the overwhelming majority of images of Moses discussed in this thesis focus on the subjects of the desert miracles: the manna, the water from the rock and the brazen serpent. While the importance of these subjects to Counter Reform mandates is surely at stake here, it should also be noted that these subjects by their very nature concentrate on the group. Where subjects of the desert miracles appear in Rome and in Florence, these are restyled to emphasize Moses' role as activator of the event, as in the *Water from the Rock* at the Vatican Logge (fig. 169). The biographical stories of Moses are conspicuously absent in sixteenth-century Venice. The Finding of Moses and the Burning Bush, stories taken from the early hagiographic chapters of the Exodus, were integral to the programs in Rome; the Appointing of Joshua, with its intensely imperial overtones, played a part in the Florentine Chapel of Eleonora; and Moses Receiving the Law, especially the placement of the tablets into the hands of Moses, was an emblem for authority, particularly papal authority. Where these subjects do appear in Venice, the shift away from biography is always prominent: the reliefs of *Moses Receiving the Law* on the Ducal Palace column capital and on San Marco refer more broadly to the government as a whole as an institution of justice and at the Madonna dell'Orto the scene at Mount Sinai is entirely reinterpreted to focus on spiritual transfiguration. It would be difficult to imagine Duke Cosimo in such a moment of illuminated ecstasy.

Context also plays a factor in considering the Venetian monumental images of Moses. Whereas the central Italian images are found mainly in private chapels, such

as the Chapel of Eleonora, or in elite locations, such as the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Logge, the Venetian images were in most cases available to a broad audience. Despite the radically different ecclesiastical characters of the parish church of the Madonna dell'Orto on the outskirts of the city and the grand Benedictine San Giorgio Maggiore overlooking the *bacino*, the images of Moses in their main chapels were available to be seen by all ranks of the social hierarchy. In the quasi-religious context of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, there must have also been quite a variety of viewers, including the wide range of *cittadini* from the rich and powerful merchants such as Martino d'Anna to the craftsmen and artists such as Tintoretto himself. On the occasions of the ducal *andata* the viewing audience would expand to incorporate the highest ranks of nobility: the doge and the signoria. Even in more exclusive contexts such as the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi, site of Bonifacio's *Gathering of Manna and Quails* (fig. 114), by virtue of its patronage the image of Moses is distinguished by a particular corporate ethos.

Finally, patronage is, of course, linked with the physical contexts of the works. While in central Italy we speak of single patrons—Duke Cosimo, Sixtus IV, Leo X—in Venice the patrons of the monumental paintings of the prophet are frequently groups. In the Veneto the *scuole del sacramento* were repeated patrons of images of Moses. In the city of Venice Tintoretto's great canvases were all commissioned or paid for by corporate patrons: the Secular Canons of San Giorgio in Alga at the Madonna dell'Orto, the Scuola di San Rocco and the Benedictine Order at San Giorgio Maggiore.

The Final Decades of the Sixteenth Century and the Early Seventeenth Century

The preceding summary of the distinguishing characteristics of images of Moses in Venice still leaves two questions unanswered: why did the narratives of Moses flourish in Venice and why did this flourishing begin from the 1580s? The Appendix shows that the overwhelming majority of paintings of these subjects in the later years of the sixteenth century occur in sacred settings, especially in chapels of the Sacrament and at altars of reservation. As Maurice Cope has demonstrated, in post Tridentine Catholicism there was renewed emphasis on both the receiving of and veneration of the Eucharist. This directive underlined the already strong tradition of devotion to the Sacrament in Venice. As a result, there was an increased need for church decoration that displayed appropriately Eucharistic iconography.¹ Images of stories such as the Fall of Manna and the Water from the Rock clearly fulfilled that need. This is nowhere more evident than in Palma il Giovane's elaborate program for the old sacristy of San Giacomo dall'Orio (figs. 141-49).² The cycle was commissioned by the parish priest Giovanni Maria da Ponte (1576-1606) as part of a wider building and decoration scheme already underway and was completed in 1581. The paintings on the walls are the *Passover* (fig. 141), the *Deposition of Christ* (fig. 142), the *Drowning of Pharaoh* (fig. 143-44), the *Gathering of Manna* (fig. 146), *Elijah and the Angel* (fig. 147) and the *Brazen Serpent* (fig. 145). On the altar wall is the *San Silvestro the Pope and the Apostle Jacob Assist the Parish Priest Giovanni*

¹ Cope, *Venetian Chapel* Chapter 7, esp. 264-73.

² Boschini, *Le minere* 514-15. Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 181, n. 1 and 198-99, n. 2. Giovanni Costantini, *La chiesa di san Giacomo dall'Orio in Venezia: Notizie di storia e d'arte* (Venice: Scarabellin, 1912) 53-54. Antonio Niero, *Chiesa di S. Giacomo dall'Orio Venezia, Venezia sacra* 15 (Venice: n.p., 1979) 82-90. Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 2: 174. Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Il ciclo eucaristico di Palma il Giovane nella Sagrestia Vecchia di San Giacomo dall'Orio," *Da Tiziano* 334-36. Rinaldi, *Palma* 121-22. Mason [Rinaldi], "Venetian Painting in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Venice: Art and Architecture*, vol. 2, ed. Giandomenico Romanelli (Cologne: Könemann, 1997) 534. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 203. Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 64.

Maria da Ponte as He is Presented to the Virgin by Saint Mark (fig. 149).³ At the center of the ceiling is the canvas of the *Eucharist Adored by the Four Evangelists* (fig. 148).⁴ The Old Testament scenes form the familiar types of salvation and Eucharist, appropriate partners for the New Testament stories that highlight redemption through Christ. This in conjunction with the subject of the ceiling canvas explicates the Council's promotion of the devotion to the Sacrament. Completed in the year of the apostolic visitation, these works made a timely proclamation on the sacrificial nature of the Mass.⁵ Therefore, the historical and religious context is fundamental in understanding the proliferation of the Moses imagery in the later sixteenth century.⁶

Nevertheless, this does not explain why images of Moses were specifically chosen for the cycle. As Cope's thesis shows, there was an extensive range of appropriate iconography upon which the artist might have drawn: images of the sacramental Christ, of the Lord's Supper, of the Passion and of a range of other Old Testament types, such as Abraham and Melchizedek and David and Abimelech. Indeed, according to Cope's chronological catalogue, though the Moses narratives decorated chapels of the Sacrament in the Veneto from the 1520s, these subjects did not appear in such settings in the city of Venice until the early 1580s with works such as Leonardo Corona's *Gathering of Manna* at San Giuliano and Palma's cycle at San

³ Giovanni Maria da Ponte was both a canon of San Marco and arciprete of the Congregazione di S. Silvestro. Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 198, n. 2. Rinaldi, "Il ciclo eucaristico" 334.

⁴ At the center of the image of the Four Evangelists are the arms of Giovanni Maria da Ponte: *I* (oannes) *M*(aria) *P*(onte). There may be a link between San Giacomo dall'Orio priest and the image of Moses along the lines of Cicogna at the Gesuiti (see Chapter 2). However, given current lack of substantial evidence, no argument may be made.

⁵ Rinaldi, "Venetian Painting" 534.

⁶ It has also been suggested political and social significances underlie Palma's paintings: the *Brazen Serpent* being a possible reference to the plague and the *Drowning of Pharaoh* to the victory at Lepanto. Niero, *San Giacomo dall'Orio* 83, 86. However, the time gap of a decade between these events and the completion of the pictorial cycle must call the soundness of this argument into question.

Giacomo dall'Orio.⁷ Prior to this date the iconography of the chapels focused more exclusively on images of the Last Supper, the Washing of the Feet, the Agony in the Garden and other scenes from the Passion. Therefore, although the numerous images of Moses of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century decorate in almost all circumstances sites for reservation of the host, we cannot look to the iconographic history of the chapel of the Sacrament in Venice as the exclusive source for the use of this iconography.

While the emphasis on devotion to the Sacrament in the latter half of the sixteenth century set the context for a flourishing of images of Moses in Venice, it may be suggested that the impetus for artists and patrons to choose the narratives of Moses with greater frequency for their decorative schemes in this period was the influence of Tintoretto. As this thesis has shown, it was Tintoretto who produced the first images of Moses on a truly monumental scale in Venice. The inventive compositions and the novel interpretations of subject matter in his works at the Madonna dell'Orto, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and, later on, at San Giorgio Maggiore established a pictorial approach to Moses that can be seen—if often less successfully rendered—in the works by artists of the later period. Returning to Palma's cycle as San Giacomo dall'Orio, scholars have already pointed out the stylistic derivations from Tintoretto's oeuvre.⁸ For example, the use of light in the *Passover* has been compared with Tintoretto's rendition of the subject for the San

⁷ Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 275-94. More recent scholarship has revised Cope's dating of 1575 for the San Giacomo dall'Orio cycle. See Rinaldi, *Palma* 121-22.

⁸ Costantini, *La chiesa di san Giacomo dall'Orio* 54. Niero, *San Giacomo dall'Orio* 82-83. Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del seicento*, vol. 1 (Milan: Alfieri, 1981) 33.

Rocco Sala Superiore.⁹ In both, the Hebrews with staffs in hand gather closely around the table in the dark with only a central flame to illuminate their faces and cast the corners of the images into deep shadow. While Brescian artists were already painting scenes in this mode earlier in the century, it was Tintoretto who offered Palma a near contemporary model in the city of Venice. Furthermore, the figure style and compositions throughout the cycle recalls Tintoretto's work at San Rocco. Though produced on a more condensed scale, Palma's *Fall of Manna* and *Brazen Serpent* echo the Sala Superiore scenes. Inspiration for the scantily clad, elongated bodies with twisting torsos, such as the figure hoisting a tray of food at the far left of Palma's *Fall of Manna*, may have arisen from the sinuous curves of similarly styled figures from the San Rocco ceiling paintings, including the two framing figures of the *Fall of Manna*: the semi-nude young man and Moses himself. Likewise, the tumbling bodies, foreshortened so as to appear to project beyond the picture plane at the left of the *Crossing of the Red Sea* and at the foreground of the *Brazen Serpent* at San Giacomo dall'Orio evoke the more sophisticated intertwining of limbs presented in the *Water from the Rock* and the *Brazen Serpent* at the Scuola. Although the San Giacomo dall'Orio canvases may lack the bold compositional choreography of the principal images of the San Rocco ceiling, the similarity of Palma's style to Tintoretto's suggests that he was looking to the senior artist for inspiration.¹⁰ An affinity for the Moses narratives may very well have been part of Tintoretto's legacy.

⁹ It has been suggested that the use of night scenes in the latter half of the sixteenth century is directly in response to the 1570 *Breviarium Romanum*, which stresses nighttime prayers. See Berdini, *Religious Art* 20. For more on Palma's contemporaries who used night scenes, see Rinaldi, "Il ciclo eucaristico" 334.

¹⁰ The style of Palma is sometimes so close to that of Tintoretto that their works have been mistaken for one another. For example, Palma's *Passover* (Rovigo, Pinacoteca dei Concoridi; c. 1595; fig. 160) was originally attributed to Tintoretto. Rinaldi, *Palma* 107.

The Tintorettesque manner is, of course, the thread that runs through all of the later Venetian images of Moses. Many of these works are by former studio assistants of Tintoretto, such as Antonio Vassilacchi, alias Aliense, (1556-1629), Domenico Tintoretto (1560-1635), and Andrea Vicentino (c. 1542 - c. 1617), and by followers, notably Leonardo Corona (1561-1605) and Santo Peranda (1566-1638). Works such as Aliense's *Brazen Serpent* (1588; fig. 103) for the main chapel of Sant'Angelo Raffaele betray explicitly the stylistic influence of the workshop master.¹¹ In the upper left corner the figure of Moses, calling for the attention of the Hebrews, points to the serpent entwined about a cross. At his feet a mass of intertwined bodies tumbles across the scene. The dramatic action culminates with two men locked in each other's arms falling over backwards at the immediate foreground. Behind them, figures struggle futilely against the wrath of the serpents. At the right, two women with arms outstretched appear to propel themselves out of the scene. The drama of this action set in a wilderness landscape recalls again Tintoretto's work at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco.

Indeed, the ceiling of the San Rocco Sala Superiore had persistent influence on later artists. Palma demonstrated repeatedly his affinity for Tintoretto's rendering of Moses imagery. In addition to his work at San Giacomo dall'Orio and at the Crociferi (see Chapter 2; figs. 150 and 154-55), there is also his *Brazen Serpent* (1595- c. 1600; figs. 161-62) for the nave of San Bartolomeo. Together with Santo

¹¹ Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 244. Boschini, *Le minere* 331. Pallucchini, *Seicento* 45. Aliense's canvas is located opposite Alvise dal Friso's *Centurion before Christ* (1588), a reference to the humility and worthiness of approaching the sacrament. For a thorough explanation of the connection between the two paintings, see Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 244-54.

Peranda's *Fall of Manna*, it was commissioned by the Scuola del Sacramento.¹² Like the central ceiling canvas at San Rocco, the figure of Moses stands on a distant hilltop, encouraging the Hebrews to look to the serpent on the cross. Below, a mass of figures struggles against the poisonous snakes. Semi-nude bodies, rippling with muscles, wrestle along the ground. The density of the crowd and the dramatic foreshortening of the bodies are in direct response to Tintoretto's canvas of two decades earlier.

Palma, Aliense, Corona, Peranda and Andrea Vicentino are associated with what Boschini termed the *sette maniere*: mannerist artists of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries whose styles derived from the sixteenth-century Venetian artistic giants, notably Tintoretto.¹³ Others artists, such as Alvise Benfatto, called del Friso, (1544-1609) and Francesco Montemezzano (c. 1540-1602), are customarily classed simply as followers of Veronese.¹⁴ However, images such as Montemezzano's *Gathering of Manna* (San Francesco della Vigna) with the raw muscularity of two male figures crawling across the ground and twisting to offer a pan of food to the crowd behind indicate that, at least in the depiction of the Moses narratives, Tintoretto's influence was never too far away.¹⁵ Indeed, even into the seventeenth century artists continued to build on Tintoretto's tradition filtered through the artists of the *sette maniere*. For example, Marco Vicentino, the son of Andrea, painted the *Gathering of Manna* (fig. 232) for the main chapel at the Carmine.¹⁶ The position of Moses seated at the center of the painting and turning to address a group of men

¹² Boschini, *Le minere* 138. *Da Tiziano* 236. Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 2: 400, 514. Rinaldi, *Palma* 118. Sansovino, *Venetia* (1663) 126. See also Cope, *Venetian Chapel* 4-5.

¹³ For more on Boschini's *Distinzione di sette maniere in certa guisa consimili* (1674), see Rinaldi, "Venetian Painting" 538 and Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana* 30.

¹⁴ Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana* 21. Alvise del Friso was the nephew of Veronese.

¹⁵ For an illustration of Montemezzano's *Fall of Manna*, see Cope, *Venetian Chapel* fig. 247.

¹⁶ Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana* 41.

recalls Palma's version of the subject at the Gesuiti while the semi-nude bodies rippling with taut muscles and sinuous curves highlight the stylistic legacy of Tintoretto.¹⁷

Despite the fact that only a few of these later images of Moses survive today, connections with Tintoretto can still be posited in some cases. For example, the large program of Moses narratives by Aliense and Domenico for the ceiling of the Sala Superiore of the Scuola dei Mercanti must have relied heavily on Tintoretto's model at San Rocco. The subjects at the Mercanti in many ways mimicked those at San Rocco: *Water from the Rock*, *Brazen Serpent*, *Fall of Manna*, and *Pillar of Smoke*. These were accompanied by the also familiar *Fall of Man* and *Jonah and the Whale*. Additionally, the inclusion of the *Adoration of the Golden Calf* may have been a reference to Tintoretto's nearby *Madonna dell'Orto* canvas.¹⁸

With the exception of Palma's cycles at the Crociferi and San Giacomo dall'Orto, the almost total absence of documentary evidence for these images makes any significant historical consideration of them impracticable. However, if we consider again that the images of Moses in Venice outnumber those in Rome by nine to one (see Introduction), it is clear that the Council of Trent's decrees on the Real Presence cannot be considered the sole explanation for the rise of Moses imagery at the end of the sixteenth century. Tintoretto's legacy to the artists of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries must also have played a significant role in the proliferation of Moses subjects in Venice.

¹⁷ In addition to Marco Vicentino, other seventeenth century artists such as Filippo Zanimberti, a student of Santo Peranda, could have been recipients of Tintoretto's legacy through their masters.

¹⁸ An *Adam and Eve Expelled from Paradise* was also included in the ceiling program. Cycles of Christ and Mary were located on the walls. Boschini, *Le minere* 452-53. Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings* 137-38.

Veronese's Paintings of the *Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter*

While Tintoretto's work in the 1560s and 70s seems to have established the dominant iconography of Moses in Venice, particularly the prevalence of the desert narratives that would be developed by his followers and imitators into the seventeenth century, there also existed a second strand of images of Moses. Veronese began producing paintings of the Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter in the 1580s for private patrons. Several versions of the subject are now scattered around the world in various art galleries.¹⁹ However, in the absence of any significant documentation on the paintings, the attributions of many of them continue to be debated. At present, only four canvases—those in Dresden, Washington, Madrid and Lyons (figs. 226-29)—are generally considered to be autograph, although workshop assistance is suspected even in these cases.²⁰ Although Bonifacio de' Pitati's renditions of the subject produced more than thirty years prior outside of Venice are often cited as prototypes for Veronese's works, no direct connection has yet been established between them.

The paucity of evidence on these paintings makes it virtually impossible to contextualize them in any significant way. However, in light of this thesis a few general points may be made about the contrast Veronese's paintings make to the works by Tintoretto and his followers. First, Veronese begins to produce his images of Moses just at the same time that Tintoretto's followers do the same. Second, Veronese's subject is derived from the biography of Moses while the other artists continue the Tintoretto tradition of focusing on the miracles in the desert. Third,

¹⁹ See the Appendix.

²⁰ Pignatti and Pedrocco, *Veronese* cats. 282, 283, 284 and 285. See also Richard Cocke, *Piety and Display in an Age of Religious Reform* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) 59 and Rearick, *Art of Paolo Veronese* cat. 74.

Veronese's works are painted on a small scale for private patrons while the paintings discussed in the previous section were all monumental works commissioned by corporate patrons. At its most basic level, this brief outline could raise questions about the position of Moses imagery and the competition in the art market between the two Venetian artistic camps but, again, the lack of information on all of these later works impedes any serious speculation. Therefore, in this context we will restrict ourselves to simply noting that there were two strains of Moses imagery meeting different demands. The following section, therefore, will look briefly at Veronese's alternative images of Moses, focusing on the Dresden (fig. 227) and Madrid (fig. 228) paintings, and will reflect on their legacy to the eighteenth century.

The Madrid Painting

The Madrid canvas was likely one of the first of Veronese's renditions of the Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter. Unlike Tintoretto's monumental paintings discussed in Chapter 4, 5 and 6, Veronese's vertical painting measures an intimate 50 x 43 cm. Pharaoh's daughter is shown standing to one side dressed in rich satins and brocades in the fashion of the sixteenth century. Her hair is pulled away from her face in an elaborate coif of plaits and a string of pearls circles her neck. Elegant and poised with her hands on her hips she looks unmoved by the wriggling babe presented to her. The princess's maids titter about gesturing to the naked child brought up out of the water. The river Nile flows off into the background, a stone bridge arching over its width. Two maids continue their bath in the river unaware of the scene that takes place by their mistress. The tall, spindly trunks of two trees help to structure the composition.

Veronese's compositional invention is not entirely new. As we have seen in Chapter 6, illustrations of the Finding of Moses and Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter were common in printed Bibles of the period. Based on the similarity between the pictorial devices in the woodcuts and in the Madrid painting, it is probable that Veronese was acquainted with these printed images. Details such as the bridge arching over the river in the background (figs. 33, 46 and 56), the princess surrounded by her court of maids beside a screen of trees (fig. 78) and a woman running through the water (fig. 56) can be found in this popular imagery. At the same time, Veronese's painting differs radically from the few examples of the subject produced by the Tintoretto studio (figs. 182, 187 and 190).²¹ Although a comparable emphasis on the luxuriousness of the princess and her company is evident in these canvases, the Tintoretto paintings may be classed more appropriately as the *Finding of Moses*: the child has hardly been raised from his basket as the women gather around to inspect him. These versions lack the formality of the presentation that Veronese's image evokes: the aloof character of the princess as the baby is offered at her feet for judgement.

Indeed, the most significant aspect of Veronese's composition is the dramatic tension between the princess and the child Moses. Exodus 2: 1-10 focuses very specifically on events as they relate to the abandoned child. In the scriptural account, details of Pharaoh's daughter and her entourage extend only so far as they are necessary to explain how the child was found. When the princess opens the basket and sees the crying child inside, she is immediately moved to pity. Her position in the story is important in so far that she is the vehicle by which the child will be saved; and

²¹ Pallucchini and Rossi, *Tintoretto* cats. 187 and 266

there is no question that he will be saved. This is not the case in Veronese's depiction of the scene. The Egyptian princess, in all her regal splendor, is very much the focus and it is only through her downward glance that any prominence is given to the upside down child, lifted from the river. His pure, pink flesh (despite that he has just emerged from a reed basket covered in tar) and his extended little leg suggest his vulnerability as he awaits the pleasure of Pharaoh's daughter. Although the child's face is obscured, the tilt of his head indicates that he looks up to the princess. With hands on hips, she meets his gaze as if challenged by his presence. His fate has not yet been decided.

The charm of the narrative and the luxuriousness of the detailing of fabrics and materials in Veronese's picture is a far cry from the acrobatic semi-nude bodies that characterize Palma's contemporaneous images of Moses at San Giacomo dall'Orio. Nevertheless, both the *Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter* and the images produced by the followers of Tintoretto have one thing in common: they shift focus away from the figure of Moses. Throughout this thesis, we have seen how in the sacred images by Tintoretto and other Venetians the role of Moses is simply that of a spiritual guide, a figure secondary to the moral struggles of the Hebrews as a group. In Veronese's Madrid painting the little figure of Moses, held precariously in the arms of a maid, is almost incidental to the principal figure: the princess. Without clues to its original context, we cannot definitively interpret this narrative choice. However, we may speculate that the sumptuous styling and the decorum of the demeanor of the princess would have appealed to a patrician or an ambitious *cittadino*—Veronese's

typical patrons.²² Perhaps this small canvas speaks more of the sensuous desires of a certain sector of the Venetian social hierarchy than it does of the biography of Moses.²³

The Dresden Painting

Although the Dresden *Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter* (fig. 227) is larger in scale than the Madrid image, measuring 178 x 277 cm, and is in horizontal format, it still retains many of the earlier example's pictorial motifs. The daughter of Pharaoh stands slightly left of center, she arches back slightly with hands on hips. She wears a luxurious sixteenth-century gown with a diadem on her head. Her ladies in waiting gather around and hold up the baby retrieved from the water. The eye contact between the princess and the child Moses is made more explicit in this case since he is now turned upright, his face fully visible. The princess betrays her enchantment with the abandoned child as she offers a slight hint of a smile. The halberdiers gathered at the right corner and the Moorish slave with two dogs emerging at the left suggest an extension of the narrative space beyond the picture plane. The leafy background maintains the arched bridge over the Nile and one woman running along the bank.

Unlike the Madrid painting, the Dresden version of the *Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter* can be linked to a specific location. Ridolfi remarks briefly on one "Mosè bambino ritrouato nel fiume, gentile componimento" as one of two

²² The figure type and detached manner of the princess recall Venetia herself (fig. 231). Should further evidence surface on Veronese's *Presentation*, it might be possible to propose a link between the Egyptian princess and the personification of Venice.

²³ The link between the Venetian patriciate taste for luxury and Veronese's various versions of the *Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter* has been made in the past. See Rearick, *Art of Paolo Veronese* 144 and Giles Robertson, "Tiepolo's and Veronese's *Finding of Moses*," *Burlington* 91 (1949): 99-100. Given the lack of any substantial evidence for these paintings, such generalizations must remain speculative. For Veronese's appeal to the needs and desires of the Venetian aristocracy in public commissions, see Evers, "Art of Paolo Veronese."

“historie” at the casa Grimani ai Servi in Venice (fig. 233).²⁴ Originally located on the Fondamenta Canal in the *sestiere* of Cannaregio, the palace itself no longer exists, having fallen into disrepair after the last heir of the family, Lauredana Grimani, married and left her home in 1772. The edifice was later dismantled in the early nineteenth century.²⁵

Though it is unknown where in the palace the Dresden painting would have been displayed, given its size and the choice of subject and style, it is possible that it once decorated the walls of the *salone* on the *piano nobile*. History paintings were particularly well suited to the long *salone* walls and benefited from the natural light that streamed through the large window arcades. The *salone* was a public space maintained for receiving and entertaining guests and its decoration reflected its function. The robust style and color of these paintings promoted a festive atmosphere while their Biblical or antique subjects were appropriately edifying, reflecting the social class of both palace owner and guest.²⁶ Perhaps the Dresden *Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter* fulfilled this purpose.

Unfortunately, the almost total lack of even the most basic information on the Veronese images of the child Moses means that attempts at their historical interpretation must remain nebulous. Of interest here, however, is the fact that they did not inspire immediate imitators like the Moses subjects of Veronese's rival, Tintoretto. Even those artists who were typically associated with the Veronese school, such as Montemezzano, chose at least in part to follow the lead of Tintoretto when

²⁴ Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie* 1: 318. Pignatti and Pedrocco, *Veronese* cat. 284.

²⁵ The two doorframes on the fondamenta remain in their original position. Elena Bassi, *Palazzi di Venezia* (Venice: Venezia Editore, 1976) 552.

²⁶ Pictures such as the *Family of Darius before Alexander* (National Gallery, London; 1565-70; fig. 225) painted for the Pisani family would have been appropriate *salone* decorations. See also Cocke, *Piety and Display* 31.

they tackled Moses imagery. It would not be until the eighteenth century that Veronese's versions of the *Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter* would take root in Venice in the work of Sebastiano Ricci (fig. 174) and Giambattista Tiepolo (fig. 180-81) and a whole new era of Moses imagery would begin.

APPENDIX

Chronological Catalogue of Venetian Images of Moses to the Early Seventeenth Century

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
13 th century	San Marco, atrium, north wing, east bay	Moses Cupola:	Unknown	9-20
		<i>Moses Early Childhood</i>		
		<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>		
		<i>Moses before Pharaoh</i>		
		<i>Moses Slays the Egyptian</i>		
		<i>Moses with Two Hebrews</i>		
		<i>Moses Wandering</i>		
		<i>Moses at the Well with the Daughters of</i>		
		<i>Jethro</i>		
		<i>Moses Drives away the Shepherds</i>		
		<i>Moses Received by Jethro</i>		
		<i>Burning Bush</i>		

¹ The locations given in this catalogue are those of the original installation. If the work of art has been moved from its original location or the original location is unknown, the present location is given in parentheses.

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
13 th century	San Marco, atrium, north wing, east bay, north apse	<i>Desert Miracles</i>	Unknown	21
13 th century	San Marco, atrium, north wing, east bay, south apse (replaced in the 17 th century)	<i>Crossing of the Red Sea</i> <i>Song of Miriam</i>	Unknown	
15 th century	San Marco, west façade	<i>Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law</i>	Unknown	98
c. 1435	Ducal Palace, northwest corner	<i>Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law</i>	Unknown	97
1466	Scuola Grande di San Marco (destroyed 1485)	<i>Crossing of the Red Sea</i>	Gentile Bellini	255
c. 1500	(Courtauld Gallery, London)	<i>Burning Bush</i>	Attributed to Giorgione	129
c. 1505	(Uffizi, Florence)	<i>Trial of Moses</i>	Attributed to Giorgione	128
Early 16 th century	Collection of Michele Viannello (lost)	<i>Drowning of Pharaoh</i>	Unknown	
c. 1516	(Musco Correr, Venice)	<i>Drowning of Pharaoh</i>	Titian	219

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
c. 1520	Collection of Francesco Zio (Private collection, Milan)	<i>Drowning of Pharaoh</i>	Jan van Scorel	
c. 1502-28	Ducal Palace, Chiesetta del Pregadi (Accademia, Venice)	<i>Drowning of Pharaoh</i>	Andrea Previtali	165
c. 1539	Palazzo Camerlenghi, first room of the Magistrato del Monte Nuovissimo (Accademia, Venice)	<i>Gathering of Manna and Quails</i>	Bonifacio de' Pitati	114
c. 1540-45	Santo Spirito, refectory (Santa Maria della Salute)	<i>Fall of Manna</i>	Giuseppe Salviati	178
c. 1545	(Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)	<i>Adoration of the Golden Calf</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	183
c. 1545	(Private collection, Turin)	<i>Construction of the Golden Calf</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	184
Mid 16 th century	S. Sebastiano, sacristy	<i>Crossing of the Red Sea</i>	School of Bonifacio de' Pitati	
		<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Attributed to Andrea	179

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
			Schiavone	
c. 1555	(Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt)	<i>Water from the Rock</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	189
c. 1555	(National Gallery, Washington DC)	<i>Adoration of the Golden Calf</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	188
c. 1555	For a ceiling (Prado, Madrid)	<i>Finding of Moses</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	187
c. 1555	SS. Giovanni e Paolo, at the foot of a crucifix in the choir (lost)	<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	
1555-56	(Cini Collection, Venice)	<i>Finding of Moses</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	190
1562	(Palazzo Pitti, Florence)	<i>Burning Bush</i>	Paolo Veronese	224
c. 1562-63	Madonna dell'Orto, main chapel	<i>Blasphemy of the Hebrews and Moses at Mount Sinai</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	191-94
Before 1573	Collection of Procuratore Gerolamo da Mula (lost)	"Istoria" of Moses	Jacopo Tintoretto	
c. 1575-76	Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Sala Superiore, ceiling	<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	199-200

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
c. 1577	Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Sala Superiore, ceiling	<i>Water from the Rock</i> <i>Fall of Manna</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	201-03
c. 1577-78	Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Sala Superiore, ceiling	<i>God the Father Appears to Moses</i> <i>Pillar of Smoke</i> <i>Passover</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	205 206 213
c. 1580	(Prado, Madrid)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	Paolo Veronese	228
c. 1580-81	San Giacomo dall'Orio, sacristy	<i>Passover</i> <i>Drowning of Pharaoh</i> <i>Brazen Serpent</i> <i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Jacopo Palma il Giovane	141, 143-46
c. 1581	(Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyons)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	Paolo Veronese	229
c. 1581	(Art Institute, Chicago)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	School of Paolo Veronese	
c. 1581	Collection of Duke Carlo Emanuele of Savoy (Turin, Sabauda Gallery)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	Attributed to Paolo Veronese	

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
c. 1581	(Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	Attributed to Paolo Veronese	
c. 1581	Palazzo Grimani ai Servi (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	Paolo Veronese	227
c. 1581	(Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	Attributed to Paolo Veronese	
c. 1581	(National Gallery, Washington DC)	<i>Presentation to Pharaoh's Daughter</i>	Paolo Veronese	226
c. 1582	Redentore, tabernacle	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Francesco Bassano	107
Before 1585	S. Giuliano, Chapel of the Sacrament	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Leonardo Corona	
1583-88	SS Apostoli, main chapel	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	School of Veronese	230
c. 1585-95	(New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art)	<i>Finding of Moses</i>	Domenico Tintoretto	182
c. 1585-95	(St. Louis, The St. Louis Art Museum)	<i>Finding of Moses</i>	Domenico Tintoretto	
1588	S. Angelo Raffaele, main chapel	<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Antonio Aliense	103

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
1589-90	Santa Maria Assunta (Gesuiti), formerly Santa Maria dei Crociferi, sacristy	<i>Fall of Manna</i> <i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Jacopo Palma il Giovane	150 154
c. 1591-92	San Giorgio Maggiore, main chapel	<i>Miracle of the Manna</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto	216
c. 1595-1600	San Bartolomeo, nave for the Scuola del Sacramento	<i>Brazen Serpent</i> <i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Palma Giovane Santo Peranda	161
c. 1596	San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, north aisle (lost)	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Leonardo Corona	260
Late 16 th century	(destroyed, previously in Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)	<i>Finding of Moses</i>	School of Tintoretto	
Late 16 th century	San Stae, Chapel of the Sacrament (lost)	<i>Water from the Rock</i>	Palma Giovane	
Late 16 th century	SS. Apostoli, <i>banco del sacramento</i> (lost)	<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Antonio Aliense	

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
Late 16 th century	SS Apostoli, organ case (lost)	<i>Moses' Rod Turned into a Serpent</i>	Antonio Aliense	
Late 16 th century	S. Eufemia, high altar	<i>God the Father Appears to Moses</i>	Alvise del Friso	
Late 16 th /early 17 th century	S. Geremia, Chapel of the Sacrament (lost)	<i>Gathering of Manna</i> <i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Antonio Aliense	
Late 16 th /early 17 th century	S. Agnese, Chapel of the Sacrament (lost)	<i>Water from the Rock</i> <i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Antonio Aliense	261
Late 16 th /early 17 th century	San Stae, main chapel (lost)	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Leonardo Corona	
Late 16 th /early 17 th century	S. Francesco della Vigna, main chapel	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Montemezzano	
Late 16 th /early 17 th century	Scuola de Mercanti, Sala Superiore (lost)	<i>Water from the Rock</i> <i>Pillar of Smoke</i>	Domenico Tintoretto	

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
		<i>Adoration of the Golden Calf</i>	Jacopo Tintoretto (?)	
		<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Aliense	
		<i>Fall of Manna</i>		
1613	Carmine, main chapel	<i>Fall of Manna</i>	Marco Vicentino	232
The following works are cited in Boschini, <i>Le minere della pittura</i> (1664) but have not been independently verified.				
Late 16 th	Santa Maria dei Crociferi, choir (?)	<i>Passover</i>	Palma Giovane	
Late 16 th /early	S. Pietro di Castello	<i>Passover</i>	Antonio Aliense	
17 th century				
Late 16 th /early	S. Provolo	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Antonio Aliense	
17 th century				
Late 16 th /early	S. Apponal, organ shutters	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Alvise dal Friso	
17 th century				
Late 16 th /early	S. Stae	<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Gioseffo Scolari Vicentino	

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
17 th century				
Late 16 th /early	San Nicolò dei Mendicoli	<i>Drowning of Pharaoh</i>	Alvise dal Friso	
17 th century		<i>Water from the Rock</i>		
Late 16 th /early	S. Marta	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Andrea Vicentino	
17 th century				
Early 17 th	S. Gregorio	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Pietro Ricchi	
century				263
Early 17 th	S. Maria Nuova	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Filippo Zanimberti	
century				
Early 17 th	S. Giobbe	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Sebastiano Mazzoni	
century				
Early 17 th	SS. Giovanni e Paolo, refectory	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Francesco Ruschi	
century				
Early 17 th	S. Croce	<i>Brazen Serpent</i>	Girolamo Pilotti	

DATE	LOCATION ¹	SUBJECT	ARTIST	FIG.
century				
Early 17 th	S. Stin	<i>Gathering of Manna</i>	Girolamo Pilotti	
century				

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